



Apprenticeships

learning
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identifying effective practice in the delivery of Apprenticeships

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work-based
learning
work

Maria Hughes
Helen Monteiro

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Maria Hughes
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Executive summary

This report identifies characteristics of good practice in relation to the delivery of Apprenticeship programmes, provides a commentary on the extent to which these are currently in place and provides examples of good practice and barriers to further development of good practice.

The report should be of interest to work-based learning (WBL) practitioners and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), who may find it a useful guide in further developing the quality of Apprenticeships.

Good practice criteria

A review of authoritative sources of information on the delivery of apprenticeships and work-based learning identified characteristics of effective practice and informed the development of criteria for good practice. The criteria suggest what would constitute good practice in relation to different stages in the delivery of Apprenticeships.

Survey of good practice

The criteria for good practice were used as the basis of a survey of providers, which enquired about the match between the criteria and their current practice.

The survey found that where there has been attention to issues such as initial assessment, individual learning plans and on-the-job assessment, providers report that good practice is largely in place. These findings indicate that:

- some interventions have made a difference in improving quality
- targeted support for a further set of good practice characteristics is required.

Further development needs

Attention may now need to be move to areas such as the implementation of Technical Certificates and developing capacity to customise learning programmes to meet individual needs and circumstances, such as:

- enabling recruits who already hold some of the framework requirements to pursue higher qualifications
- designing programmes to meet needs and limitations of the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) workplace
- improving recruitment processes to attract under-represented groups.

Examples of good practice

Respondents to the survey were invited to take part in a series of site visits, where they elaborated on practice referred to in their questionnaire return. The outcomes of these discussions are described in the main body of the report under the relevant section of the criteria.

Introduction

1
DfES (2003)
*21st century skills:
realising our potential*

The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) has been examining critical issues concerning the development of Apprenticeships, particularly in the light of the proposals in the DfES Skills Strategy.¹ The Skills Strategy notably sets out proposals to raise the quality and effectiveness of Apprenticeships as the primary vocational option for young people, and to lift the age cap so that more adults can benefit from these 'earn and learn' opportunities.

This report identifies current practice in the delivery of Apprenticeships with a view to determining characteristics of good practice and producing guidance on these for work-based learning (WBL) practitioners and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

Rationale

Apprenticeships potentially provide an ideal opportunity for the development of a sound theoretical base alongside awareness of practical application in the workplace. Converting this ideal into practice requires a considerable amount of coordination and partnership working between the various parties who have a part to play in the learning process. Awareness and agreement on the part of these players of their respective roles in the learning process, and of the overall aims of the particular Apprenticeship framework is vital. However, the contexts in which Apprenticeships are delivered are extremely variable, which militates against a single preferred model and points instead to the development of agreed criteria for good practice, which may be interpreted differently, but with equal rigour, in specific contexts.

2
DfES (2001)
*Modern Apprenticeships:
the way to work*

The National Skills Taskforce expressed concerns over the lack of an adequate base of underpinning knowledge through the NVQ alone in some Apprenticeship frameworks. This call was later repeated in the Cassels Report on Modern Apprenticeships,² and the development of Technical Certificates has since been underway. The LSDA research therefore sought examples of good practice in the delivery of Technical Certificates, and on their overall impact on learning delivery. It also considered ways in which key skills are being developed, delivered and assessed.

Research aims

The research aimed to:

- review views on what constitutes good practice in the delivery of Apprenticeships from authoritative sources such as DfES and the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) advisory committee
- draft criteria for good practice based on the above and consult with interested parties on its appropriateness
- survey providers about the relationship between their practice and the good practice criteria
- compare the learning experience of Apprenticeships with the ideal suggested by the criteria to identify examples of good practice in action and barriers to this.

Method

The research involved a range of methods of enquiry, as follows:

Literature review

Authoritative sources on what constitutes best practice in MA delivery were reviewed. The outcomes of the review were used to develop criteria for good practice which embodied the features of effective delivery identified in the literature.

Survey of WBL providers' views on good practice

The criteria of good practice informed the production of a survey of WBL providers, which asked providers about the match between the criteria and their practice.

Site visits

Site visits to 24 providers were undertaken to identify good practice and barriers to its development as a basis for further investigation.

Expert seminar

Emerging findings for the research were discussed at an expert seminar attended by a cross-section of representatives from WBL including employers, providers, the Sector Skills Development Agency, the Adult Learning Inspectorate and the Learning and Skills Council. The purpose of the seminar was to explore the emerging findings and to enable them to be tested and verified.

Findings

Literature review findings

A review of more than 20 authoritative sources³ relating to apprenticeships and/or work-based learning was carried out to identify effective practice in the delivery of apprenticeships. A large degree of consensus emerged from the material concerning what constituted effective practice in this area.

The review informed the development of draft criteria for good practice in the delivery of apprenticeships. The criteria were arranged in order to relate to different stages of the delivery of Apprenticeships, although there is some crossover between sections. The draft criteria of good practice in the delivery of Modern Apprenticeships are shown in Appendix 4, in the form of a checklist for providers. Providers and LSC may find this list of desirable processes a useful guide in assessing the quality of the delivery of Apprenticeships, while bearing in mind that even excellent provision may not include them all.

³ List of sources in Appendix 1

Survey of good practice

The criteria for good practice in the delivery were incorporated into a survey investigating how current provision matched the ideals illustrated by the criteria. This was conducted by means of a postal questionnaire to providers. The questionnaire asked questions about the match between the criteria and providers' practice, and respondents asked to indicate whether a given practice was fully in place, partially in place or not in place.

The questionnaire was circulated to 783 providers. 144 replies were received giving a response rate of 18%. Responses came from across a wide range of provider types.

The analysis of the questionnaire returns indicated that providers report that good practice is largely in place where there has been attention to issues such as initial assessment, individual learning plans and on-the-job assessment. Less well developed aspects of good practice tend to be found in areas where development activity or interventions have not been put in place, or are new elements of programmes – such as progression routes to higher level study, the provision of extension studies or assessment in relation to Technical Certificates.

These findings suggest that there is a need for attention to be given to developing good practice which relates to individualising learning programmes, as opposed to things which most candidates routinely need. This is illustrated in responses to criteria for good practice related to, for example:⁴

- provision for recruits who satisfy some of the framework requirements to pursue higher qualifications
- designing programmes to meet needs and limitations of the workplace in SMEs
- attention to under-represented groups in the recruitment process.

It may also indicate that:

- some interventions have made a difference in improving quality
- targeting support for a further set of good practice characteristics is required.

Site visits

Respondents to the survey were invited to host site visits from LSDA. During the visits, providers elaborated on practice referred to in their questionnaire returns and provided examples of good practice in action and barriers to improving practice. Twenty-four providers were visited. The providers included those who had received grade 1 in ALL inspections, and some who had received grade 4s, but all had an overall grade profile which was above the national average.

The specific findings from the site visits are described on pages 5–68, along with the criteria for good practice and the survey results.

⁴ More details of the findings provided in Appendix 2

Conclusions and recommendations

Examples of effective practice are to be found in relation to many of the criteria identified by the literature review. There is also considerable evidence of practitioners making attempts to remove barriers to good practice where these are within their control. There appears to be some embedding of good practice that has resulted from development activities and initiatives that have addressed many aspects of the criteria. A distinction is sometimes made between practice which is the norm and good practice. However, this may be de-motivating to practitioners whose practice lags behind even 'the norm', and make the task of developing to and beyond what would be expected as satisfactory even more daunting. Ambitions need to be high, but an appreciation of distance travelled could promote a culture of continuous improvement and encourage more providers to make efforts to improve to higher standards.

The survey results give policy makers and planners some insight into what needs further support for development. They may also indicate where support has succeeded. We recommend that this be taken into account when future support programmes are being considered.

The wide range of the criteria reflects the complexity of the process of delivering apprenticeships effectively. Not all of the criteria may be equally important, and it may be useful to distinguish between that which is essential and that which is desirable. Practitioners may therefore find the criteria and commentary on pages 5–68 of use to them in assessing their practice and considering how to improve it.

criteria for good practice

This section reports on the outcomes of the survey and provides a commentary on issues arising from the site visits. Examples of good practice are given, and gaps in good practice are highlighted.

Practitioners may find it useful to assess their practice against the criteria. They may wish to do this across all areas of their provision, or for selected areas. Appendix 4 provides a blank version of the checklist, which may be used for this purpose. Practitioners may also find it useful to consider the commentary on the criteria, and the good practice examples when planning to improve the quality of their provision.

Programme planning

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
All partners in the training have a full understanding of the framework and its components, and roles and responsibilities within this.	60	38	1.4
All partners are aware at the planning stage of the learning opportunities offered by the workplace, and of any limitations in these.	62	36	0.7
Planning for training programmes takes full account of learners' prior experience and knowledge and identifies learning needs.	76	21	2
Opportunities exist for recruits to apprenticeships who already satisfy some requirements to pursue higher technical or professional qualifications.	55	29	12
Programmes are designed particularly to match the needs and limitations of SMEs.	41	30	17
Programmes are designed to deliver the framework and its components to best match the needs of learners and employers.	75	21	2
Long programmes have 'staging posts' to motivate learners to continue.	43	39	16
Programme-led apprenticeships (PLAs) are offered when employer-led pathway options are not available.	31	29	27

Commentary

The criteria for good practice place great emphasis on thorough planning for the delivery of the Apprenticeship framework to ensure that all partners in the training have a full understanding of the framework and its components, and their roles and responsibilities within them. This increases the likelihood of a positive experience and outcome for all concerned.

From a consideration of the literature and in consultation with LSC, good practice in this area was said to include the elements displayed opposite. From the results of the survey with providers, it was possible to determine which aspects were fully in place, partially in place or not in operation.

Aspects of good practice said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents include:

- awareness of the framework, and respective role across all partners, learning opportunities and their limitations
- the need to identify prior experience and learning needs is taken into account during programme planning and the need to match these to the framework and its components.

Less well-developed aspects of good practice include:

- provision for recruits who satisfy some of the framework requirements to pursue higher qualifications
- designing programmes to meet needs and limitations of the workplace in SMEs
- 'staging posts' in long programmes
- programme-led pathways offered as alternatives to employer-led pathways.

The interviews explored the match between criteria and practice with examples given by providers of practice that was working well, what needed to be developed, any barriers to the development of good practice and how these can be overcome.

Well-developed practice

Awareness of the framework, and respective roles across all partners, learning opportunities and their limitations

A series of measures had been put in place by those visited to ensure that the training team, learners and employers were fully aware of the framework commitments. These included:

- whole team meetings to discuss how to deliver the framework
- involving the whole training team in the design of assignments
- regular staff meetings at the provider to review workload, learner assignments and the coverage of units
- production of an employer induction/information pack describing the qualifications available, the employers' role in the apprenticeship and the support they are expected to provide to the trainee
- regular feedback to the employers on the trainees' progress to raise awareness of the framework and to engender a sense of pride in the employer that 'their trainee' has achieved something worthwhile; this also encourages the feeling among employers that they have contributed directly to their trainee's success
- feedback on learner progress provided to parents to involve them with their son or daughters' apprenticeship.

Providers recognised difficulties in ensuring that all partners had a clear understanding of the learning opportunities offered by the workplace. One provider in the construction industry commented that due to the contractual nature of the employers' business, it was impossible to know when or indeed whether their AMAs would be able to cover certain competencies. However, this provider and others had developed a solution to this; their employers had agreed to their trainee temporarily transferring to another employer where their competency requirement could be covered.

Prior learner experience and learning needs are taken into account during programme planning and these matched to the framework and its components

Some of the providers interviewed carried out this aspect of effective practice during the selection process within the initial diagnostic tests used to assess the level of programme for which the trainee was best suited. One of the providers interviewed reported that where aspects of one NVQ (eg nail care) overlapped with those of another (eg customer service) which the trainee had already completed or partially completed, the specifications were cross-referenced and existing evidence produced by the trainee used to save duplication of work.

Good practice in this area is hindered by the lack of systematic accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) and as a result trainees were repeating in their AMA aspects which they had previously covered in their FMA. Some apprentices also commented to providers that they carried out more sophisticated work on site than they did off-the-job. Action necessary to overcome these issues included the following:

- better coordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training
- trainers to be more aware of what apprentices are doing on site
- there needs to be a careful review on the part of the providers of the comments and reports produced by the employers
- there needs to be more evidence from the trainees' on site work so that this can be better matched to the off-the-job training.

Less well established practice

Provision for recruits who satisfy some of the framework requirements to pursue higher qualifications

Although few providers said that this aspect of practice was in place, some of the providers interviewed suggested a number of ways in which it could be developed:

- trainees with the potential to pursue further qualifications are encouraged to go beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship framework both in their technical skills development and key skills
- learners' career aims should be discussed with employers. In accountancy, for example, there is a natural progression route from NVQ2 to NVQ3 to NVQ4. While trainees cannot be funded as apprentices beyond this point, they can progress to Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) training
- for some trainees their best route lies in progressing to a different but related NVQ. Information and guidance should be given to raise awareness of these options
- providers should liaise with colleges to ensure previous learning is recognised and any exemptions applicable obtained.

Designing programmes to meet needs and limitations of the workplace in SMEs

Programmes designed to meet the needs and address the limitations of training with SMEs involved the following actions:

- the apprentices' training needs, the range of skills/competencies which need to be covered and what the employers can offer were discussed with the employer and the two matched up

- employers receive advice on the content of the training programme and the level of training which the employer is currently equipped to offer. This might differ from what the employer originally had in mind, and the apprentice/employer might be advised to offer Level 2 training first and to reassess the situation in 12 months
- if an employer cannot offer training which meets all the specification, the provider negotiates with the employer how the trainee's needs might be met. This might include finding an alternative employer who can fill the gaps in training.

Good practice

P1, a large private provider covering a range of sectors, has dedicated staff (supported by assessors) who work with the employers to determine their needs and to ensure that the employers are fully informed about the framework requirements. The provider receives no funding for this activity but sees it as essential and contributing to improved retention rates.

The providers interviewed identified barriers to good practice. These included the difficulty that some SMEs experienced in releasing the trainee from the workplace. To address this, employers had requested that provision be made within evening classes; unfortunately some providers were unable to accommodate this request. An effective strategy to overcoming this barrier had been found by some providers within the sample, whose apprentices often have access to Learndirect and have access to assessors by telephone or e-mail. In some cases the provider could also take off-the-job training into the workplace. This had the additional advantage that other employees could participate in the training.

Long programmes have 'staging posts' to motivate learners to continue

Good practice among the providers interviewed had often arisen out of the need to find a solution to a problem. A provider interviewed had found that assessment was being undertaken too late in the programme and that units were not being achieved until the last stages. The provider had taken steps to plan the programmes at the element level and set medium-term targets for the completion of specific portions. However, the particular elements to be achieved could not always be fixed in advance because of the variable nature of the on-the-job experiences of the learners.

Programme-led apprenticeships are offered when employer-led pathway options are not available

The interviewed providers had little understanding of programme-led apprenticeships (PLA) as a concept.

There was only one provider from within the sample interviewed that had measures in place to offer PLAs. This provider had 16 AMAs on an Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) national programme-led pilot in which the learners attended a local FE college for 16 months full-time. During this time they were employed as apprentices by ECITB, and completed all the non-NVQ requirements of the framework. After this period the learners were scheduled to take up abbreviated apprenticeship places with employers. The scheme was thought to be particularly valuable to SMEs who may not be able to support a full programme.

Recruitment and pre-recruitment

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Recruitment materials provide clear, factual information about the content and likely experiences of the apprenticeship.	53	40	5
Providers maintain productive links with local Connexions or careers services.	70	25	5
Recruitment materials describe possible career paths in the occupational area.	39	41	16
Recruitment and pre-recruitment activity pays attention to under-represented groups.	48	44	4
MAs are promoted to employers as a means of developing existing staff as well as recruiting new staff.	65	23	4
Recruits who lack entry requirements are placed on pre-apprenticeship programmes.	45	20	28
Partners in the MA programmes actively support local student apprenticeships.	32	31	25
Opportunities exist to sample programmes through work experience or trial periods.	33	33	29
Learners are always recruited to the programme that best suits their needs.	78	17	0.7

Commentary

While final selection and recruitment is the prerogative of employers, there is ample scope for providers to demonstrate good practice from the first interaction with the potential trainee. Successful pre-recruitment and recruitment practices can ensure that trainees are placed upon the right level of programme with a suitable employer with potential to complete their framework, meeting both their learning and career objectives, fulfilling the employer's needs and ensuring a healthy success rate for the learning provider. Recruitment practices can also help widen participation among minority or non-traditional post-16 learning groups.

Aspects of good practice said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents include:

- productive links with Connexions/careers services
- promotion of MAs to employers as a means of developing existing staff
- always recruiting learners to the programme to which they are best suited (but see below for apparent contradiction of this).

Less well-developed aspects of good practice include:

- recruitment materials – in terms of clear and factual information, adaptation to suit different audiences, description of careers paths, attention to under-represented groups
- attention to under-represented groups in the recruitment process
- support for local student apprenticeships
- placement on pre-entry programmes for recruits who lack entry requirements, opportunities for sampling and or tasters.

Well-developed practice

Productive links with Connexions/careers services

The majority of providers had established productive links with Connexions. One method for maintaining productive links included formal monthly meeting between the provider and Connexions. This had the benefit of ensuring that learners at risk of dropping out could be included in a mentoring service provided by Connexions to receive any extra support necessary to help them continue their programme.

Some providers complained that they occasionally had to work with and be responsive to four or five Connexions services operating in their region and this was time consuming. Although Connexions were generally well informed about MA programmes, they were still not familiar with the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme.

Always recruiting learners to the programme to which they are best suited

The vast majority of providers stated that measures were fully in place to ensure that learners were recruited to the programme that best suited their needs. Most providers thought they could offer a wide range of training opportunities at an appropriate level for individual learners and a good range of progression opportunities.

Barriers to ensuring that this practice occurred smoothly on every occasion were still evident. Discrepancies could occur between the employers' desire for their trainees to enter their training at Level 3 and the trainees' ability. Providers suggested that by making employers more aware of the range of training programmes available and their respective demands this problem could be overcome.

Promotion of MAs to employers to develop existing staff

Providers in the sample visited spent a lot of time visiting both existing and prospective employers to discuss the nature of their workforce, their skills needs and training requirements and to determine how the provider could help them meet these needs. Providers realised that additional business could come as much from existing employers as from the constant search for new ones, and that the staff of existing employers/clients have continuous and changing skill and training needs.

Less well established practice

Quality of recruitment material

The survey found that a number of measures that are fundamental to good practice in recruitment to MAs were not fully in place. Some good practice was found however, within the providers interviewed. Information was provided in attractive and clear recruitment materials that contained simple outlines of possible career paths. Providers also published prospectuses and flyers and ran 'awareness days' in schools. A step further was found in a couple of providers who, following the learners' initial assessment and interview, offered 'apprenticeship support sessions' in which advisers set out for the trainees the vocational areas, their different pathways and the various careers to which they can lead. This included what the trainees must do to reach their goals and ambitions. Sometimes this meant the trainee had to be transferred to another provider if the original provider could not meet the trainee's requirements.

Attempts were being made by a number of the providers interviewed to attract learners from under-represented groups. This was done through a variety of methods including offering provision that may prove attractive to the target population, such as MA programmes in barbering in an attempt to attract more young men into hairdressing. One college employed a member of staff whose function was to liaise with groups and organisations which were not well represented on the courses offered. Providers were also working closely with Connexions. Some providers set aside specific days when trainees with severe learning disabilities and difficulties who had not yet made career choices came into the provider for assessment and training. These sessions could lead to learners being successfully placed on apprenticeship programmes.

One provider noted that although they were working hard to promote WBL in schools, few trainees from minority groups were recruited. This was attributed to a strong preference in some cultures for sons and daughters to follow a professional route. Some NVQs were also labelled as too restrictive. Vegetarians and some religious or cultural groups will not handle meat, yet all the units in NVQ Food Preparation and Hospitality are mandatory, including meat handling. The providers' response to overcoming this last barrier was a suggestion for the need for optional units within NVQs which make it possible for strong, grounded preferences to be accommodated.

Support for local student apprenticeships

A minority of partners in the MA programme was thought to actively support local Student Apprenticeships. Student Apprenticeships are aimed at enabling young people in full-time pre-16 education to undertake structured work-based training in approved training centres and carry out activities within local companies to gain the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to enter the vocational area of their choice through an FMA. One provider among the 24 visited was associated with the Student Apprenticeship pilot. However, this association had not been that successful. The provider in question felt that local schools were seeing the programme as a 'dumping ground' for problem pupils.

Placement on pre-entry programmes for recruits who lack entry requirements

Good practice was found within a number of the interviewed providers regarding the appropriate placement of recruits. In one college-based provider trainees lacking entry requirements are placed in the open learning centre to update their skills and develop fundamental skills before being enrolled on an apprenticeship. Such skills usually include basic skills/ key skills, book-keeping or computing skills, for example. Trainees can attend on a daily basis and such preparation usually lasts a couple of months. Some of these skills are internally certificated by the college, eg food hygiene.

Opportunities exist to sample programmes through work experience or trial periods

The need to highlight and disseminate good practice in this area is all the more pertinent following the reform of Apprenticeships that have introduced an eight-week probationary period requirement to the framework to formalise the trial period.

Some of the providers visited demonstrated effective practice in this area.

Good practice

P23, a tertiary college covering a range of sectors

Trainees are not officially enrolled on their programme until they have been visited by the assessor (usually after two weeks) and all parties are happy that the trainee is on the right programme.

Good practice

P13, a small private provider, specialising in the health and social care sector

'Taster' days are open to any interested trainee. Applicants are invited to visit the provider's premises and the nursery. All applicants are interviewed as to why they are interested in this work, and all applicants spend a minimum of three days working in the nursery for a trial period. This allows trainees to come to a more informed judgement about their future career; it also allows the staff to observe trainees before a final selection is made.

Induction

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Induction includes a comprehensive induction to the workplace and work roles.	84	13	0.7
Induction includes a description of roles, responsibilities, services and facilities of the training provider, employer, off-the-job learning providers.	88	9	1.4
Induction includes a clear explanation of the programme content, requirements for successful completion, and expectations of the learner.	86	6	0
Additional induction activities take place at major milestones in the programme.	61	23	11

Commentary

The learners' induction to their apprenticeship should provide a familiarisation with their employer's organisation, the requirements and expectations of their framework and the roles and responsibilities of key players within this. A clear explanation covering these points at the beginning of the learners' apprenticeship can effectively 'ground' their knowledge and expectations and ensure that all information requirements are met regarding opportunities for progression and sources for further advice and guidance. It can also help learners settle into their place of work and start their framework with a clear understanding of their commitments.

All the aspects of good practice listed in the questionnaire were said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents, these being:

- a comprehensive introduction to the workplace and work roles
- description of roles and responsibilities of all players involved in the programme
- a clear description of the content of the programme and expectations of learners
- induction activities provided at major milestones.

However, 11% of respondents reported that induction at major milestones was not in place, which may indicate the need for further development.

Well-developed practice

There was considerable variation between providers in the length of the formal induction period. At one provider, where the MA programme is extensively roll-on/roll-off, a four-day intensive induction programme is held each month for new entrants. It includes a:

- generic introduction to WBL
- 'fun' initial assessment, involving paired work
- basic skills/key skills initial assessment
- full day introduction to key skills requirements
- sector-specific introduction to the Technical Certificates and NVQ
- sector-specific assessment or sector-specific interviews
- gradual completion of the ILP through the four days.

At another provider the induction period was three weeks. It covered similar ground but also included several 2–3 day sampling experiences at different employers.

The thought given to induction varied from employer to employer and not all employers provided the trainees with a detailed and carefully explained job description. In response to this some providers were producing a glossy booklet containing an employers' guide to the MA programme, setting out precisely what is required of them. Employers were also given a formal induction. Where employers were reluctant to release trainees to the provider for their full induction, inductions could be delivered on-site.

In one provider based within an FE college, each department had booklets tailored to provide induction activities at major programme milestones and additional requirements of higher levels of training were discussed with learners at the appropriate time. However, it was reported that not all departments consistently applied this measure and the WBL manager had little influence over what the individual departments were doing to ensure that this occurred.

In reaction to this the WBL manager was pushing to introduce service level agreements between her WBL department and other departments involved with Apprenticeship training. This would give the WBL manager some control over how well these departments were fulfilling their responsibilities.

Initial assessments

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Diagnosis of learners' abilities and support needs in basic/key skills.	91	6	0.7
Assessment of abilities and support needs in relation to Technical Certificate requirements.	50	31	14
Occupational/aptitudinal assessment.	54	28	12
Discussion about learners' ambitions and the match with opportunities offered by the apprenticeship.	82	15	0
Assessment of the relevance and usefulness of prior experience and qualifications.	70	22	3
Initial assessment outcomes are used to match learner to employer, or learner to provider.	63	19	6

Commentary

Initial assessment is vital to enable the provider to match learners to the programme and level that best suits their interests and abilities. It can also ensure that any learning needs are identified and appropriate support offered during the learner's apprenticeship.

Aspects of good practice said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents include:

- diagnostic assessment of basic and key skills
- exploration of learners' ambitions and match with opportunities offered by the programme
- assessment of prior, related learning
- use of initial assessment outcomes to match learners to employers or providers.

Less well-developed aspects of practice include:

- appraisal of learners' abilities in relation to demands of the Technical Certificate
- occupational/aptitudinal assessment.

This has been a particular area of interest within recent years with emphasis placed on the effective diagnosis of learners' abilities and support needs in basic and key skills. This is reflected in the good match between the criteria and practice within the providers surveyed. However, practice tends to focus on basic/key skills assessment with less activity occurring around occupational/aptitudinal competence. Development was also required in the relatively new area of Technical Certificates.

Well-developed practice

Diagnostic assessment of learners' abilities and support needs in basic and key skills

Good practice

P21, a large private provider in the engineering sector, provides an initial assessment lasting about half a day. It comprises five elements:

- 1 an assessor/trainer informing the applicants of the training programme, its elements and the requirements of the NVQ; of the support structures available and of the time to be devoted to the training; an aim of this session is to inform and motivate the trainees
- 2 a mechanical competence test, comprising multiple choice questions and pictures to test the applicants' mechanical comprehension
- 3 a basic numeracy test
- 4 a literacy test
- 5 a final interview.

A number of staff members take part in order to give the applicants variety and in order for the staff to form an agreed decision.

On the basis of the assessment trainees are either accepted directly onto the programme, are put on the provider's Jobsearch programme or are rejected. The provider's Jobsearch programme was initially designed for those trainees on the waiting list (P21 have more applicants than employers with which to place trainees). This programme lasts half a day and helps applicants set out a 10-year personal development plan.

Exploration of learners' ambitions and match with opportunities offered by the programme

Initial induction within the interviewed providers generally included a consideration of learning preferences, needs, ambitions and motivation allowing learners ambitions to be matched with available opportunities. The trainees' records of learning and achievement (ROA) were also considered, as were their interests and hobbies, all of which ensured that the apprenticeship matched the learners' ambitions and needs where possible. During a one-to-one interview trainees were informed about the training programme and its requirements and these discussions served to outline alternative career paths; help maximise the trainees' potential and to help realise (or moderate) their ambitions.

The main barrier to developing and sustaining good practice in this area is reported to be the lack of employers, both in number and in range, engaged in offering apprenticeship training.

Assessment of the relevance and usefulness of prior experience and qualifications

Providers reported that they used prior experience and qualifications to assess which components of the frameworks the learners may have previously covered and to place them on an appropriate programme. Examples included providing exemptions from key skills if they had previously obtained a GNVQ or GCSE A–C in Maths, English or IT in the last three years (although portfolios still needed to be completed).

A number of the providers visited were operating or piloting ‘fast-track’ schemes to recognise and accredit their apprentices’ previous informal learning. Within the hairdressing sector, learners sometimes have considerable experience in salons assisting a relative’s business or as Saturday/holiday workers. Based on this, one provider in this sector had restructured its training programme to give more opportunities for early assessment.

Use of initial assessment outcomes to match learners to employers or providers

Providers recognised the importance of not only trying to match learners to employers but vice versa to ensure that stakeholders’ needs were met. Some employers set high standards of entry to training and set their own entry test. Providers may send only the best trainees for interview with such employers. Other employers may be more interested in having a trainee who is punctual and reliable.

One provider noted that in the furniture trades, the initial assessments can steer learners to one trade or another (for example one trade places more emphasis on numeracy) and these results are always included in discussions with employers when matching learners to employers needs. The provider also knows that some employers will give more support than others, and may place students with particular learning difficulties or social needs with them.

Good practice

P7, a private hair and beauty sector provider, visits all prospective employers and performs an initial assessment of the training and support opportunities. They also discuss the types of learner who might be available, and after the initial assessment of the learners, then match learner to employer.

Less well established practice

Many of the visited providers stated that their initial assessment included an assessment of trainees' abilities in relation to the Technical Certificate and key skills requirements at Level 2 or 3. Other providers reported that they did not separately assess abilities and/or support needs related to their Technical Certificates. They had no plans to extend diagnostic testing beyond the initial basic skills/key skills assessment. One provider had as yet made no provision for delivering the Technical Certificate that was known to be part of the new framework.

During the initial assessment many interviewed providers examined the trainees' strengths and weaknesses in relation to their occupational competence and aptitude and identified where the emphasis should be placed within the training programme. Some providers used a 'skill scan' to identify weak areas, and also employed a 'learning style questionnaire' to determine how the trainee liked to learn. Training could then be tailored to these needs and preferences.

In some of the providers visited, the results of the initial assessment were used to construct a training plan. This was accompanied by an action plan mapping out unit-by-unit how the learning plan was to be achieved, with accompanying targets and dates. Although this provided an increased workload for the assessors, they thought it was of benefit in allowing them to get to know the trainees and enabling them to tailor the learning plan to suit the individual learner. The training plan and the trainee's progress against it were then closely monitored. Trainees following this process were achieving their qualifications more quickly and the accompanying providers' achievement rates were improving.

Some providers did not think occupational or aptitudinal assessments were helpful. One suggested that it was more important to assess attitude rather than aptitude.

Barriers to good practice

There is often a mismatch between a trainee's ability to do a job well and their key skills level. Some trainees have been doing a job well for some time and have developed good vocational competence but their key skills may be below the level required, particularly if they have been out of education for some time. It can also be difficult to identify in initial assessment the full extent of the trainee's vocational competence.

Managing individual learning plans

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Learners are fully involved in developing their individual learning plans.	67	31	1
Plans take into account abilities of individual learners and needs of employers.	70	25	2
The ILP is a live working document for the learner, provider, trainer (employer) and assessor.	70	25	2
The ILP includes a learning support plan, based on initial assessment and diagnostic testing, clearly linked to both on- and off-the-job aspects of the programme.	67	27	4
The ILP is regularly reviewed, taking into account progress in training and assessment.	77	20	2
The ILP is regularly reviewed, taking into account changing needs for additional support.	68	27	2
The ILP is regularly reviewed, taking into account changing learner expectations of progression and job role.	61	28	6
The format and design of ILP accommodates review and change.	72	20	5
The format and design of the ILP is easily understood by the employer and the learner.	61	34	3

Commentary

The ILP outlines the programme of learning agreed between the employer, provider and learner. It enables appropriate targets to be set and the learners' progress to be monitored against these to ensure their motivation remains high and that framework components are achieved. It can also ensure that learners are receiving the support to help them achieve these objectives.

Within recent years the ILP has received increased attention by providers as a means to achieve success for their learners.

All the aspects of good practice listed in the questionnaire were said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents, these being:

- full involvement of learners in developing their ILP
- needs of employers and abilities of learners taken into account
- ILP seen as a live document, regularly reviewed to take account of progress and changing needs
- the inclusion in the plan of a learning support plan, based on outcomes of assessment and linked to all aspects of the programme
- the format and design of the plan being accessible.

The majority of providers indicated in the questionnaire that learners were fully engaged with developing their ILP. However, some providers remarked that few FMA learners had the ability to be properly involved in these discussions, ie to challenge or contribute positive suggestions.

Well-developed practice

Providers said they adapted initial ILPs to take account of the outcomes of diagnostic assessment and learners' previous experiences. Some providers integrated the needs of employers into the plans, but a few thought that as employers' needs were considered at the assessment stage there was no need to consult them on the ILP. Employers were given a copy of the plan.

One provider from the hairdressing sector said many of their employers did not take part directly in discussions about the ILP at review meetings as time away from the salon meant they lost income. Review appointments were always made sensitively and well in advance, to try to fit in with less busy salon times.

Innovative practice

P22, a voluntary organisation in the health and social care sector

Each learner has a weekly review to discuss progress towards targets. A major review with the placement officer is held at least every eight weeks and targets are set for the next 6–8 weeks. The placement and learning opportunities are discussed when setting these targets. A traffic light system is used to signal concerns. Green signifies progress is satisfactory and no action is needed before the next review. Amber means this target will be monitored more closely (perhaps every 2–3 weeks). Red means learners will be closely monitored – perhaps every 2–3 days, or at least weekly. Learners and employers were said to understand this system.

The majority of interviewed providers thought that the format and design of the ILP was accessible. Some providers were revising the ILP and review formats to take into account the increasing complexity of the framework and expectations of support arrangements.

Innovative practice

P22, a voluntary organisation in health and social care is developing a paperless version of their ILP. Its structure will be similar to the 'progress map' used for E2E learners. All those involved with a learner will be able to access the ILP online and (within constraints) add to or modify it. It will be accessible online to learners as a read-only document. The provider believes this will improve understanding and access, but is doubtful that learners' views on the relevance of the ILP will improve. Currently they 'rarely think about their ILP between reviews' and this is unlikely to change.

Barriers to good practice

Some providers thought that senior managers may fail to impress upon staff the importance of completing the ILP. As a result the ILP was not regularly updated nor paperwork completed after each visit. Providers and employers may also fail to cooperate in the completion of the ILP.

One provider argued that as ILPs are auditable documents, control by the provider is necessary. All learners accepted onto their programmes have an identical ILP and an identical learning programme. The ILP gives no information about additional support as 'passing' the initial assessment is considered a condition of entry. The ILP is only taken out of the file for learners to sign off what they have received. Employers are not involved in its development. The provider believed that employers might withdraw from Apprenticeship training if they were made aware of its complexities.

Supporting the learner

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Systems are in place to identify and support learning needs throughout the programme.	81	18	0
Support needs are revisited regularly and revised as necessary.	75	23	0.7
Peer support is provided, eg through buddy, or twinning arrangements.	20	45	32
Supervisors move learners to more appropriate situations in the workplace, to secure better learning experiences.	45	47	4
Training is provided for workplace staff to enable them to act as mentors, supervisors and assessors.	28	45	25
Experienced staff, who provide a good role model, act as mentors for learners.	38	46	11
Training provider visits: are to both on- and off-the-job learning situations.	91	6	2
Training provider visits: include both formal progress review visits and other less formal occasions.	90	7	0
Training provider visits: can be arranged at short notice to include on-the-job assessment opportunities.	82	14	0.7
Learners are included in the employer's appraisal system.	43	39	13
Employers provide incentives for learners to progress on their programme.	20	56	19
Providers and employers have established links with a wide range of external support agencies.	45	45	9
Learners are encouraged to continue with their learning programmes even if they decide to change employment part-way through.	80	10	3
Employers offer financial support for essential expenses.	29	50	18
Employers have well-established policies for equal opportunities, harassment etc, and these are clearly conveyed to the learner.	45	53	0.7
Employers provide alternative learning experiences for learners who feel that a particular company placement is unsuited to them.	21	42	30
Support arrangements known to each partner.	61	35	1
Strategies to encourage and support trainees with disabilities, gender or other social barriers exist across the learning experience.	57	41	0

Commentary

It is necessary to ensure that learners' individual learning support needs are met but also that they are provided with peers and rewards to encourage them to progress through their programme. This can contribute towards the completion of the framework and progression to another learning aim. Good practice criteria can be identified from the literature on a number of aspects under the banner of 'supporting the learner'.

Interestingly in this category the match between criteria and practice varied from very strong, for example in the identification of learning needs throughout the programme, to needing further development in the case of provision of incentives and the provision of alternative learning experiences.

Aspects of good practice said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents include the following:

- systems are in place to identify and support learning needs throughout the programme
- support needs are regularly revisited and revised
- support needs are known to all partners
- training provider visits are to both on- and off-the-job locations, are both formal and informal, and can accommodate on-the-job assessment at short notice
- learners are encouraged to continue with their programmes if they change employment part-way through.

Less well-developed aspects of good practice include:

- provision of peer support
- movement of learners to different situations in the workplace to secure better learning experiences, or provision of alternative learning experiences for those who find a particular placement unsuitable
- provision of training to enable workplace staff to act as mentors, supervisors or assessors
- use of experienced staff as role models and mentors
- inclusion of MA learners in the company appraisal system
- provision of incentives by employers for learner progression, financial support from employers for essential expenses
- establishment of links by providers and employers to external support agencies
- policies and support for equal opportunities.

The interviews found evidence to suggest that in the provision of additional learning support to meet ALN/ASN, private providers were giving the level and quality of support previously associated with FE colleges. Within the providers interviewed good practice was also evident in the level of training given to staff to help them meet individual learners support needs and there was a general awareness and promotion of equal opportunities.

Well-developed practice

Systems are in place to identify and support learning needs throughout the programme and these are regularly revisited and revised

Almost all interviewed providers addressed support needs during regular progress review meetings. Subsequent actions could include contacting parents, bringing in external support agencies (drug awareness, pregnancy advice etc), or the provision of counselling through the providers' own counselling service. Sometimes learners would be assigned a member of staff as a mentor to provide very close support. In some providers managers operated an 'open door' policy for trainees seeking advice, guidance and support.

Providers had taken additional steps to ensure that learners' support needs were being fully met throughout the duration of their programme.

Good practice

P7, a private provider in hairdressing, has recently employed two graduates to look at how student performance can be improved through better learner support. The graduates are closely monitoring the 'learners' journey' through the assessment programme to see where pressures and tensions arise. They are being trained as assessors as part of this initiative.

Good practice

P15, a private business and engineering sector provider, employ a full-time pastoral tutor. The tutor has good links with a number of support agencies and these are drawn in as necessary. She manages the initial assessment and induction programme and pays an initial visit to all MAs in their place of work about four weeks after the start of their programme. Copies of all subsequent reviews also go to the pastoral tutor. Learners are encouraged to contact this tutor at any time.

Providers identified barriers to good practice in the reviewing and updating of additional support needs. In comparison with the facilities available within colleges, smaller private providers may struggle to provide appropriate levels of support for the trainee. However, the advantage of their small size was that the vocational trainers could develop a close working relationship with the trainees, fulfilling as they did multiple roles as trainer, assessor and mentor. This last function was used particularly when the trainee received support from a third party to ensure continuity in the learning programme and for learners.

Support needs are known to all partners

Support needs and resulting arrangements were generally discussed at progress review meetings between the provider and the learner. Employers were either a full part of these meetings or were fully informed of the outcomes.

Good practice

P7, a large private hairdressing provider

Employers are given an 'employer pack' relating to each apprentice. The pack includes the ILP, personal development plan, and support details. The employer is expected to have this to hand at each review, when updates can be included.

Training provider visits are to both on- and off-the-job locations, are both formal and informal, and can accommodate on-the-job assessment at short notice

All the providers visited conducted site visits for regular (usually 6–8 week) reviews, and more frequently for assessments. Some had additional pastoral visits by a pastoral tutor. Short-notice visits, occasionally on the same day, were common.

Good practice

P13, a small private provider in the health and social care sector

For the last five years a Care provider has carried out all on- and off-the-job training in-house. The nursery and all the training are self-contained within one well-organised building. The unit managers and room leaders, overseen by the training manager who is responsible for the off-the-job learning, carry out on-the-job training. Assessment is responsive to the needs and progress of the trainee and takes place as and when the trainee and supervisors feel the trainee is ready.

Learners are encouraged to continue with their programmes if they change employment partway through

According to the providers who were interviewed, such changes were fairly common and could be more frequent within certain sectors such as hairdressing, where apprentices can become frustrated by the limitations of small salons.

Good practice

P24, a private provider in the engineering sector

An apprentice on an FMA wished to progress to AMA, but his employer would not support him. The provider found an alternative employer willing to employ the learner through AMA. Another learner doing an NVQ in woodworking was finding it hard and was about to drop out.

P24 negotiated a change to NVQ in wood machining and the learner has stayed on track.

Less well established practice

Provision of peer support

Some providers visited agreed there might be advantages to peer support and that there were no real barriers to it taking place. Within at least four of the providers interviewed there had been a movement towards the provision of peer support.

Innovative practice

P24, a private provider in engineering

A furniture-manufacturing provider was setting assignments that require learners from two trades (eg wood machining and upholstery) to work together to gain joint working skills and promote mutual support. They are also considering how their AMAs can be used to buddy their FMAs.

Good practice

P5, a large voluntary organisation in land-based provision

The young trainees live at the provider's premises for the nine weeks of training, after which they live for the duration of the on-the-job training with the horse race trainer. Within the accommodation all the trainees occupy twin rooms: beginners are matched with a more experienced trainee from the previous intake. The 'buddy' helps show the novice the tasks to be performed and provides support in addition to the tutors and staff. The support systems have to be good, as P5 is acting in loco parentis. This sector has a specialist minister providing pastoral care, who visits the provider once each week.

Movement of learners to different situations in the workplace to secure better learning experiences, or provision of alternative learning experiences for those who find a particular placement unsuitable

This was found to occur more frequently in the larger employers where there is sufficient flexibility. If at the learner review it is recognised that a trainee cannot cope with or is not benefiting from the placement, some providers discuss the situation with the manager/supervisor within the workplace and arrange for the trainee to move to a more appropriate job/department in the firm.

Where there is less flexibility, examples were given of employers cooperating to transfer learners to another employer to get the most appropriate learning experience. This practice could be inhibited by the view of some employers that trainees are profit-making members of staff who should be contributing a full day's work. Providers thought that employers were generally reluctant to let trainees go elsewhere, for example to cover a skill which the employer cannot provide.

Good practice**P24, a large private engineering provider**

One employer has volunteered the use of a particular machine that is under-used as a training machine for apprentices based at other employers.

The providers interviewed reported that not all employers took the review process seriously and put off their contribution to it. The providers' response to this was to work with employers to convince them that the trainee is key to their business and that the training needs to be taken seriously.

Provision of training to enable workplace staff to act as mentors, supervisors or assessors

Within the interviews there were examples of good and innovative practice regarding training staff to support learners and an indication of what the barriers may be to other providers following suit.

Some of the providers in the interviewed sample had an active training programme for employers. For one provider, once an employer has agreed to take an apprenticeship, they offer free training to achieve an assessor award, free training as a mentor, and free training in areas such as health and safety.

Good practice**P5, a large voluntary organisation in the land-based provision sector**

P5 is funded by the racing industry to run courses for staff from the horse training yards who are supervising trainees and other personnel during their on-the-job training. The courses include outside experts on HR matters, on employment law, how to communicate with staff, how to handle troublesome staff, etc.

The take-up of training was said to depend on the size of the firm, with SMEs having more difficulty releasing staff for training. It was remarked that the situation had not been improved by the introduction of 'A Units' which are harder to acquire than the previous D32, requiring more attendance and more paperwork. Added to this obstacle, not all workplace supervisors readily accept the requirement to be trained and qualified as assessors and mentors.

Use of experienced staff as role models and mentors

A minority of providers and employers used experienced staff to provide good role models and act as mentors for learners. 38% of providers thought this did occur, but this figure is 10% more than for those providers who had the training process in place to ready mentors for their roles.

Inclusion of MA learners in the company appraisal system

According to the providers interviewed it was often only the larger employers that had formal appraisal systems and AMAs were usually included as a matter of course due to their employed status. It was thought that FMAs with employed status should be included, but providers did not think it was appropriate for trainee-status FMAs to be included, as it expected too much of an employer who was not fully committed to that learner.

When formal company appraisal systems were not in place, providers encouraged employers to set targets for the trainees, to consider ways in which the trainee might develop within and beyond the training framework, and to consider where the trainee fits and might fit within the business.

Provision of incentives by employers for learner progression, financial support from employers for essential expenses

The provision of incentives by employers for learner progression was encouraged by providers, yet thought to be fully in place in just 20% of employers. Generally, incentives were in the form of pay rises following achievement of particular milestones. Some employers gave annual awards to encourage progress.

Employers did not always see it as necessary or their responsibility to support learner progression through the payment of incentives. A number of providers in the sample were counteracting this through their own award system including purchasing silver badges from the awarding body which were given to successful trainees.

Within the sample interviewed, providers noted that many employers offered to cover apprentices' travel expenses and many paid for uniforms and some equipment and tools – although providers remarked that this seemed to be largely the case when apprentices were not being paid a reasonable salary. Some providers in the sample did not consider that it was their place to encourage this practice and that once trainees had found a placement, employers usually provided good support; the issue was with finding a placement in the first instance.

Establishment of links by providers and employers to external support agencies

Despite the poor response to this question within the survey, the providers interviewed were very positive about their links to external agencies. It may be that the providers who responded to the questionnaire thought that their employers' links to outside agencies were not as strong as their own.

Many of the providers interviewed had established relationships with a range of external agencies. These include drug awareness agencies, pregnancy advice services, accommodation/housing organisations, counselling agencies, and Connexions. Most providers recognised that employers did not have the same range of contacts, and that providers could do more to raise awareness of the support available to employers. One provider was exhibiting particularly good practice in this area, providing every employer with their contact list and asking them to display it on their notice boards.

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Adult Learning
Inspectorate (2003)
*Chief Inspector's
report 2002/03*

Policies and support for equal opportunities

Less than half of providers felt that employers have well-established policies for equal opportunities (EO) and dealing with harassment, and that these were clearly conveyed to the learner. This area was highlighted in the ALI Chief Inspector's report for 2002/03⁵ as a cause for concern. The report stated that among poor providers, 65% had poor arrangements to promote or secure equality of opportunity.

Many of the providers interviewed checked that EO-related policies were in place before making a placement. Where policies were not in place, they offered assistance or training to the employer.

Good practice

P24, a large private engineering provider

P24 have regular breakfast meetings with employers in which updating and training feature strongly. P24 checks all employers before they take on an MA to ensure that EO-related policies are in place. They then recheck annually. If they find that the policies are not there, or not sufficiently robust, P24 suggest the employer adopt P24's policies and offers training. EO training has been a feature of some of the breakfast training events ... 'an eye-opener for some'. P24 have a well-constructed 'questions to trainees' booklet related to EO that they use in progress review sessions.

Several providers visited had an impressive pro-active stance towards encouraging learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, or with disabilities or social needs. Good quality posters were displayed in reception and other public areas showing a broad spectrum of learners. Similarly in the training environment, diverse role models were available and emphasis was placed on personal ambition and the will to succeed. Marketing literature stressed opportunities for young men in hairdressing and care professions, and for young women in computing and engineering.

One barrier that was recognised by providers was the general problem of providing appropriate role models from their own staff. However, some providers were able to draw on case studies of past students to illustrate success.

With regard to specialist equipment necessary to support some learners with learning difficulties or disabilities, providers were aware that they could apply to LSC for additional funding.

Reviewing progress and target-setting

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Individual learning plans set clear and easily understood long-term and short-term targets for learners, based on initial assessment.	75	22	2
Progress is frequently reviewed and involves learner, provider, and employer.	91	8	0
Progress reviews are clearly differentiated from meetings concerned with other issues.	84	12	2
Review and target-setting processes cover all aspects of the framework.	84	14	1
Each review sets revised short-term and long-term targets as appropriate, recorded in an updated ILP.	63	29	2
Short-term targets: set small steps in progress.	74	22	1
Short term targets: build on previous skills and competencies.	75	20	2
Short-term targets: are achievable in realistic time scale.	76	21	0.7
Constructive feedback is given to learners at the end of each review and recorded in the ILP.	72	20	5
Achievements are recorded to provide evidence of overall progress towards framework, or NVQ, achievement to motivate both learners and assessors.	81	18	0
Learners are encouraged to reflect on their progress and learning experiences.	79	20	0.7
All interested parties receive a copy of the completed review form.	89	9	0.7

Commentary

Reviewing progress and setting targets with learners, provider and employer can motivate learners to achieve and ensure adequate assistance is provided throughout the programme to address any difficulties. By involving all parties in this process it can increase engagement and ensure that learner, employer and framework needs are met.

The criteria suggest a number of areas where good practice could occur throughout the learners' programmes.

All the aspects of good practice listed in the questionnaire were said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents, these being:

- long- and short-term targets set in ILPS based on initial assessment
- frequent and dedicated review of progress, involving learner, provider and employer, which covers all aspects of the framework and sets new and achievable targets
- constructed feedback is given and recorded
- learners encouraged to reflect on progress and achievements recorded both to provide evidence of completion and to motivate learners
- all interested parties receiving a copy of the completed review form.

(Note however, the apparent lack of review of key skills indicated below.)

The survey results suggest the match between criteria and practice is strong. Many of these criteria are involved within the ILP process. There were few examples of exceptional practice with the majority of processes being carried out by the majority of providers. It appears from the interviews that providers understood the processes for reviewing progress and were setting targets to good effect.

Well-established practice

Long- and short-term targets in ILPs based on initial assessment

In many of the interviewed providers, short-term targets were set each time an assessor visited a trainee. Targets are to be achieved within the next fortnight. In addition, longer-term targets are set every two months, which is often the time between review visits. These targets are set according to the trainee's starting point (incorporating the results of the initial assessment), ability and progress.

In most companies used by the providers visited there is someone in the workplace who is familiar with the trainee's targets and takes some responsibility for supervising them.

The trainee's progress is measured in terms of the number of Performance Criteria the trainee has covered. Progress to date is measured in terms of the percentages of the NVQ, key skills and Technical Certificate which have been completed and accordingly the setting of appropriate targets for further completion.

A hairdressing provider visited set three types of target at each learner review and these were recorded as modifications in the ILP:

- very short term (eg finish an assignment by the end of this week)
- before the next review (eg successful assessments covering X,Y, Z)
- ongoing (eg maintain punctuality above 90%).

This could motivate the learners by providing a regular sense of achievement and manageable progression steps.

Another provider has a similar procedure and redesigned its review and assessment paperwork, placing emphasis on 'bite-sized' chunks of learning. This had resulted in the establishment of achievable short-term targets and had led to improved learner performance.

Frequent and dedicated review of progress, involving learner, provider and employer, which covers all aspects of the framework and sets new and achievable targets

Providers held regular formal reviews of progress with learners at 6–8 week intervals. Employers were involved directly whenever possible, but their views were always solicited, and they were informed of outcomes. In some companies this process could encounter barriers if for example the company did not value the training or were not sufficiently aware of the framework requirements. Providers were, however, working to improve this and thought it necessary for the company and not just the trainees' line manager to be actively engaged with the MA process.

The large majority of providers agreed that the review process was clearly differentiated from meetings concerned with other issues, for example assessments, pastoral matters or disciplinary action.

Review and target-setting was seen to cover all aspects of the framework in the majority of providers surveyed and interviewed. It also provided the opportunity for constructive feedback to be given to learners and recorded in the ILP. A typical review document seen during site visits included:

- space for learner's views to be entered
- space for supervisor's/employer's views to be entered
- requirement for graded assessment of social and work skills, and for progress in NVQ, Technical Certificate and key skills
- space for recording support received and additional support needs
- space related to H&S and EO monitoring
- record of agreed actions still outstanding from the last review (by learner, employer or assessor)
- record of agreed new actions and targets.

Learners are encouraged to reflect on progress and achievements are recorded both to provide evidence of completion and to motivate learners

Many providers encourage the trainees to take ownership of the portfolio, to analyse the work they have done, the difficulties they have experienced and how they addressed them. This process was generally in place through discussions at the point of review and at assessments. Review records also required a commentary by learners on their progress. However, records seen during the site visits varied in the quality of learner input.

Achievements were regularly recorded by the providers to provide evidence of overall progress towards achievement of the framework, or the NVQ, to motivate both learners and assessors. One provider had recently developed a spreadsheet to assist this process. The spreadsheet mapped the progress and achievements of each learner through all aspects of the framework. It was available to all partners in learning, and used as a basis for discussions on progress with learners.

All interested parties receive a copy of the completed review form

This aspect was in place in the vast majority of providers visited. Employers (including supervisors and work-based assessors), and learners received copies of the completed review form. Providers also mentioned separate copies going to the key skills coordinator and the pastoral tutor where these roles were in place.

Delivery of key skills requirements

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Learners, employers, assessors and those involved with off-the-job learning: fully understand key skills requirements and their relevance to employment and progression in the occupational area.	38	56	4
Learners, employers, assessors and those involved with off-the-job learning: are involved in developing appropriate vocationally-based learning that satisfy the keys skills requirements.	40	49	9
Learners, employers, assessors and those involved with off-the-job learning: have ready access to staff with appropriate training in key skills.	59	32	4
Key skills development begins at the earliest opportunity in the learning programme.	72	22	3
Opportunities for delivering key skills and obtaining evidence of their use are mapped across the learning experience, including NVQ and workplace-related activities.	59	34	4
Special projects are designed to satisfy key skills requirements, which clearly relate to the learner's workplace.	61	33	4
Key skills assessments have a direct occupational relevance.	63	30	4
Additional support for key skills development is rooted in the occupational area.	56	32	9
Key skills abilities are regularly reviewed and relevant aspects of the ILP modified.	43	43	10
Success in key skills requirements is celebrated by both provider and employer.	41	39	18

Commentary

Key skills are seen as essential generic skills that underpin education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development, essential for individuals to possess to be able to compete in the labour market.⁶ Guidelines have been developed so that all learners in post-16 education and training have the opportunity to develop and improve their ability to communicate, numeracy and IT abilities.

Key skills have therefore attracted considerable interest and research and development into their effective delivery.

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DfES (2004)
*Key skills policy
and practice:
your questions
answered*

Aspects of good practice said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents include:

- beginning key skills development as early as possible in the learning programme
- design of special projects and assignments to relate to learners' workplace with direct occupational relevance
- key skills assessments with direct occupational relevance.

Less well-developed aspects of good practice include the following:

- all parties
 - understand key skills requirements and their relevance to employment and progression
 - are developing vocationally-based learning that satisfies key skills requirements
 - have access to staff trained in key skills
- opportunities for developing key skills are mapped across the programme
- additional support for key skills is rooted in the occupational area
- key skills abilities are regularly reviewed and the ILP modified
- success in key skills is celebrated.

The match between the good practice criteria and practice within the providers surveyed was not strong. Further development is required to improve stakeholders' understanding of key skills. Other areas for development included the celebration of learner success and the development of appropriate vocationally-based learning to satisfy key skills requirements. There had, however, been developments in delivering key skills and online testing.

Well-developed practice

Beginning key skills development as early as possible in the learning programme

All the providers within the interviewed sample claimed that key skills development and evidence gathering started right at the beginning of the learners' programmes, often as part of the induction. One provider was becoming increasingly involved with the 14–16 age group and proposed to cover some of the key skills development with this group so that this can be carried forward onto an MA.

Interviewed providers thought that there were a number of problems related to the early development of key skills, namely the learners' lack of ability to complete these elements within the length of their programme, and the lack of staff with the ability to teach the key skill requirements. This last factor was exacerbated by the need for staff to upgrade their qualifications to meet FENTO standards (Further Education National Training Organisation) and eventually be teacher trained. Interviewed providers were adapting to these requirements by increasing the amount of staff development. Some staff were completing the City and Guilds qualification in key skills and were planning to continue to take the Certificate in Education. This had enabled these providers to give trainees more structured off-the-job learning in key skills.

Design of special projects and assignments to relate to learners' workplaces and have direct occupational relevance

Just over 60% of providers designed projects and assignments to relate to the learners' workplaces. No examples of good practice were given during the interviews.

Less well established practice

All parties understand key skills requirements and their relevance to employment and progression

Many of the interviewed providers explained the role and significance of key skills to the trainees on the first day of training and the trainees immediately began to produce work to support key skills. However, this does not mean that all parties understand or agree upon the requirements. One provider believed that the key skills requirements were ‘an artificial imposition’ and had no relevance to employment. Their employers do not understand the requirements because the provider does not attempt to explain them. This provider instead teaches key skills independently in formal classes where each learner gets the same programme.⁷

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At this provider’s recent ALI inspection, key skills delivery was highlighted as a key strength

Other providers held training events for employers to establish an understanding of the key skill requirements and their relevance to employment. One provider said that they do a ‘really hard sell’ on key skills to convince employers that proficiency in key skills was good for their business.

Good practice

P24, a private engineering provider, hold training sessions for employers on framework requirements, and any changes in requirements, including key skills. These are usually part of breakfast meetings held 2–3 times per year. P24 also have an employer newsletter that includes news of any changing requirements, etc. One employer also does the off-the-job training – P24 have provided key skills support for these staff at their workplace.

All parties are developing vocationally-based learning that satisfies key skills requirements

Providers commented that employers do not usually involve themselves directly in the key skills nor in ensuring that the vocational learning satisfies the key skills requirements. The employers’ priority is instead on the development of the technical skills.

In response to this, providers were keeping employers up to date on their trainee’s progress on all the framework components and attempting to reinforce the importance of key skills by emphasising how the trainees’ competence in key skills will benefit the employer.

All parties have access to staff trained in key skills

Within one provider interviewed, all six off-the-job trainers had key skills teaching qualifications. Within a college-based provider, all the staff who were directly delivering key skills, had or are working towards key skills qualifications as part of their professional development.

Providers recognised a barrier to good practice in the difficulty of recruiting staff with the right expertise to deliver key skills. It was found that staff were occupationally competent and many had achieved key skills at a level above that which they were assessing but were not confident to teach key skills, particularly to trainees who required additional support. Staff without key skills qualifications often had little time to devote to their own development.

Opportunities for developing key skills are mapped across the programme

Within the majority of providers visited the opportunities for key skills development and evidence were identified and discussed with the external verifier and other key players and improvements made until everyone was satisfied.

Good practice

P15, a small private business sector provider

For business administration and customer services, P15 has developed its own delivery system. They set all learners a 'shopping centre development' project. This project combines all NVQ knowledge and understanding, Technical Certificate, and key skills requirements. Employers get a full introduction to the project and receive a scheme booklet. Each week, employers are updated on what the learner has achieved. They are encouraged to move the learner further through the project while in the workplace.

Additional support for key skills is rooted in the occupational area

Two providers from the sample interviewed were particularly concerned to use vocationally relevant examples when setting up key skills project work.

Key skills good practice

P10, a voluntary organisation specialising in the health and social care sector

All key skills 'tuition' is based on 1:1 contact between a learner and a tutor. P10 believes that, for their learners, key skills class-groups do not work. A basic skills specialist works closely with each learner from the initial assessment up to the key skills test.

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P10 have a range of commercial key skills software (purchase funded by the LLSC) to support learning. Learners with home PCs install the software at home. Learners without home PCs are loaned a laptop. Because 'tuition' is all 1:1, learners do not need to be removed from their workplace – tutors visit learners at their place of work instead.

P10 also stay open one day per week from 18.00 to 20.00 and Saturday morning for learners to attend BS/key skills sessions. P10 is able to offer employers replacement agency staff to cover for absent learners through LSC 'train to gain' funding.

Key skills testing is all online (P10 are part of a local pilot). Learners are able to take mock tests online to see if they are ready. Once the test is taken, results are known immediately. Learners think this is 'brilliant'.

Key skills abilities are regularly reviewed and the ILP modified

Many providers reviewed key skills as part of the formal progress review. Several checked on progress much more frequently, for example one provider ensured that each learner met one-to-one with a key skills tutor every week. All support was recorded, together with any short-term actions required.

Within the providers interviewed, regular reviews were used to ensure that those learners with difficulties were getting the support necessary to achieve the components and to identify learners who were capable of making faster progress. Trainees who were assessed as capable of progressing to an AMA are encouraged to complete higher-level key skills while training for their FMA. This enables the provider to shorten the AMA completion times.

Good practice

P10, a small voluntary organisation specialising in the health and social care sector

Individual learners are targeted each month for achieving key skills. For example, after discussion two learners may decide they are ready to complete their key skills requirements. With the agreement of staff, they learners will be targeted for a particular month. They will have intensive support for completing their key skills portfolio (and it is in this period the laptops will be loaned etc) and for test-preparation. Described by P10 as 'blasting them to the finish'. Learners are sometimes targeted because they are felt to be losing motivation because they do not feel they are progressing. Pass rates for key skills are said to be 100% under this system, and the qualifications are usually being achieved well before the expected MA completion date. A similar system is applied to taking Technical Certificate tests.

In some organisations trainees regularly complete mock key skills tests in order to identify progress and difficulties. The introduction of online testing has also improved the speed of diagnosis and the identification of remedial action.

Celebrating success in key skills

The site visits revealed that achievement was more commonly celebrated on the completion of the framework. It was thought by providers that often employers do not see the direct relevance of key skills and therefore have little interest in celebrating the trainees' success.

Some providers were handing out certificates in the workplace and organising or planning to organise MA awards evenings introducing key skills awards alongside awards given for technical/vocational performance.

Off-the-job learning

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Employers are involved in the planning and delivery of off-the-job learning.	36	47	14
Off-the-job and on-the-job training are coordinated and supportive of each other.	47	46	6
The contributions of third party providers of off-the-job learning are fully integrated into the overall learning programme.	39	31	16
Employers encourage use of the company as a case study in assignments.	33	46	17
Employers take a direct part in learning activities away from the workplace.	18	50	29
Off-the-job learning providers are fully aware of the range and requirements of Technical Certificates, and trained in their delivery.	51	34	6
Providers take account of the full range of Technical Certificates available and select the most appropriate one for the learner and employer.	57	30	6
Technical Certificate training starts as early as possible in the learning programme.	58	31	6
Technical Certificates are available through flexible learning (where this benefits the learner and/or employer).	29	38	27
The off-the-job learning environment has good simulated training facilities.	63	26	6
All involved with delivering off-the-job learning reflect the ethos and structure of the workplace, eg time-keeping and dress codes.	74	20	2

Commentary

Off-the-job learning is the element of the Apprenticeship framework delivered away from the workplace, possibly in a classroom or workshop setting. It includes more theoretical aspects of the job role, providing the underpinning theory and knowledge to occupational tasks. Delivered well, off-the-job learning augments the learners' practical and theoretical knowledge in relation to their workplace experience and ensures that they have a rounded ability in their chosen profession.

During the interviews some providers confessed to being reluctant to involve employers in the 'off-the-job' elements as this may deter employers from being involved in apprenticeships. This did differ by sector with hairdressing providers actively involving employers.

Aspects of good practice said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents include the following:

- the off-the-job learning environment has good simulated training facilities
- all parties reflect the ethos and structure of the workplace.

Less well-developed aspects of good practice include:

- involvement of employers in planning and delivering off-the-job learning
- coordination and mutual support of on- and off-the-job learning
- integration of the contribution of third-party providers
- use of the company in case-study assignments
- direct involvement of employers in learning activities outside the workplace
- awareness and capacity of the off-the-job provider in relation to Technical Certificates
- selection of the most appropriate Technical Certificate
- early commencement of Technical Certificate training, and flexible delivery of this where appropriate.

Well-developed practice

The majority of providers thought that off-the-job learning provided good simulated training facilities and that all parties involved in off-the-job learning reflected the ethos and structure of the workplace. This was an area regarded as good practice by the providers. The majority of the providers interviewed had clear expectations of dress code when on placements and while at the providers' premises. The importance of good time-keeping was also continuously stressed.

Good practice

P13, a small private provider specialising in the health and social care sector

Trainees' induction makes clear the ethos of the organisation and the workplace. Trainees must keep to time and a dress code applies. Trainees and staff wear a uniform which is differently colour-coded for the trainees, room leaders and managers. This helps parents identify the status and position of the staff.

Less well established practice

Involvement of employers in planning and delivering off-the-job learning

The majority of providers interviewed did not seek to involve employers to any great extent as most thought that this was a step too far. It was thought that employers did not regard off-the-job learning as their responsibility and could feel out of touch with classroom-based activities and training associated with the Technical Certificates and key skills.

The providers' response to this barrier was to involve employers and others, such as equipment suppliers, in short courses and demonstrations. These were provided for trainees, trainers and employers to keep them up to date with the latest technology and techniques.

Barriers to good practice

As employers were reluctant to release trainees from the workplace, the provider was attempting to cover the Technical Certificate elements while visiting the trainee on-the-job. ALI refused to recognise this as off-the-job training. The provider will now conduct all the off-the-job learning in-house and has made all the staff aware of the need for this.

However, some providers were also seeking to fully involve employers with organising and delivering the off-the-job training.

Good practice

P5, a large voluntary organisation specialising in land-based provision

P5 has a trainers' committee which meets three times per year. It comprises employers, representatives of the National Training Federation, P5 and the awarding body. This body keeps the training provider up to date with the employers' and trainees' needs so that changes can be made to programmes if required to ensure a greater match with provision.

Good practice

P23, a tertiary college catering for a range of sectors

The college organises business clubs and open days to involve and inform employers. It also surveys employers to see whether they want any changes made. Every questionnaire is closely followed up. The comparatively small size of the provision makes this possible.

Coordination and mutual support of on- and off-the-job learning

Two of the hairdressing providers interviewed actively involved employers in the majority of the 'off-the-job' aspects of the programme. All hairdressing apprentices were given weekly schemes of work covering their off-the-job training. These were also given to the employer and attempts made to coordinate the learners' on-the-job experiences with what was being covered in the college. This is recorded on a on-the-job training card which is returned to the college.

Good practice

P13, a small private provider in the health and social care sector

- The 'company' and its work provide the whole structure and content of the training programme. Case studies are based on the trainees' everyday work.
- The trainers are fully aware of the Technical Certificate requirements and much of the theory springs directly from and is integrated into the on-the-job learning.
- Off-the-job training is organised in two parts: half a day on independent working, working on assignments and portfolio building, carrying out practical tasks (such as making puppets for the children or working on the computer), and half a day on instruction supporting key skills and the Technical Certificate, and preparing the trainees for the next unit. In discussion, the trainees and training manager identify what the trainees have covered and what needs to be done next.
- The requirements and elements of the Technical Certificate have been mapped on to a grid and much of the Technical Certificate content springs directly from the practical work the trainees are doing on-the-job for their NVQ.

Integration of the contribution of third-party providers

One provider was putting in place staff development for assessors and teachers to improve their understanding of the full framework requirements and how all partners could contribute to it. The provider was also in the process of appointing an additional placements officer who will be charged with showing employers exactly what learners will be doing, and how the employers etc can support this and contribute to the complete framework.

Employers encourage the use of the company in case-study assignments

It was thought by the questionnaire respondents and by the interviewees that this aspect was rarely in place. Providers suggested that companies were used as a basis for case studies where possible but the variability of employers made it too difficult. Providers understood that it would be possible if they dealt with one large employer from whom there was a reasonable sized group of apprentices.

Good practice

P3, a large private provider specialising in the business sector

All Technical Certificate assignments are directly related to the place of work. The Health and Safety case study has to be a study of the workplace, with recommendations to employers.

Employers take a direct part in learning activities outside the workplace

This aspect of good practice elicited one of the lowest responses of 'fully in place' across the entire questionnaire, of just 18% of providers. Consequently, the interviews did not yield many examples of good practice except for the following, which would seem to be a particularly rare example.

Good practice

P15, a small private provider offering training in business and engineering

P15 has developed its own delivery system for business administration and customer services. They set all learners onto a 'shopping centre development' project. This project combines all NVQ knowledge and understanding, Technical Certificate, and main key skills requirements. Employers get a full introduction to the project and receive a scheme booklet. Weekly lesson plans have been agreed and written by P15 staff. Each week, employers are updated on what the learner has achieved. They are encouraged to move the learner further through the project while in the workplace.

While some providers tried to involve the employers to support the key skills aspects, it was often felt that the required staff lacked the confidence and appropriate training to do so. This was coupled with the fact that employers did not always regard the off-the-job elements highly. One provider was addressing this by designing a staff development programme suitable for all staff, to raise awareness of key skills, bring all staff up to the required grades, and raise their confidence in meeting key skills requirements.

Awareness and capacity of the off-the-job provider in relation to Technical Certificates and selection of the most appropriate

Just over half of providers said that they were fully aware of the range and requirements of Technical Certificates. The interviews found that one or two providers were concerned about how late the off-the-job provider was in developing or appointing staff to cope with delivering the new Technical Certificates in their area.

In some areas there is little choice of Technical Certificate, possibly accounting for why only 57% of providers thought they were fully aware of the range and selected the most appropriate for the learner and employer. One provider had taken a decision to work with only one awarding body, so there was no choice.

Early commencement of technical certificate training, and flexible delivery of this where appropriate

From the interviews, it was established that where Technical Certificates existed, providers started training at the first opportunity, possibly within the first week. One provider used intensive training to accelerate the Technical Certificates programme for appropriate learners.

Good practice

P23, a tertiary college, covering a range of sectors

Training for the Technical Certificate starts within the first month and is completed in about six months. Theoretical training is modularised and takes place at a set time each week. The training is supported by open learning. Some work is online using Learndirect. The college is open all year, with the exception of Christmas, to enable the trainees to have access to learning.

Although there was some evidence of flexible delivery from the interviews, the questionnaire indicated that few providers had facilities fully in place to support this. There was one example of exceptionally good practice in supporting flexible learning.

Good practice

P15, a small private organisation specialising in the business and engineering sectors

Off-the-job learning for learners in motor vehicle studies is based on a series of CD-ROMs produced by the SSC, 'Automotive Skills'. Each CD covers a different aspect of the NVQ. All knowledge and understanding requirements, Technical Certificate requirements, and key skills requirements are included and integrated. Learners have a supporting workbook. One CD is fully interactive and enables learners to test themselves. The lead internal verifier reports that learners react well to the system. They learn at a faster pace and work to a higher standard. Key skills are tackled successfully, and usually earlier than previously. Inspectors were said to be 'very impressed'.

On-the-job learning

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
On-the-job learning is planned as an integral part of the individual learning plan.	58	37	4
On-the-job learning is structured to meet both learners' and employers' needs.	63	33	2
On-the-job learning offers a wide range of opportunities for learners to gain evidence of competence, and for assessment of competence.	66	30	1
The workplace offers a wide range of learning opportunities, which includes periods of formal, practical training on specific occupational aspects.	51	45	1
The workplace offers a wide range of learning opportunities, which includes challenging tasks for learners to complete.	54	44	0
The workplace offers a wide range or learning opportunities, which includes work-related training, including opportunities to gain additional qualifications to enhance employability.	48	47	2
The work-place offers a wide range of learning opportunities, which includes good training facilities.	46	48	2
Off-the-job and on-the-job training are coordinated and mutually supportive.	58	38	2
Formal practical training is closely reinforced by workplace activity.	61	34	0.7
Workplace staff are appropriately trained, qualified and experienced, and understand the qualification and support needs of learners.	43	50	6
Workplace training is well-resourced.	47	45	6
Employers' in-house training arrangements are included in the training providers' quality assurance arrangements.	35	38	25
Emphasis is placed on developing new competencies, as well as on gathering evidence and assessment of existing competencies.	53	40	3
Learners are allocated specific time on-the-job to consider their learning, complete a 'learning log', and build their portfolio.	40	47	10
Employers actively encourage learning, eg by allowing time for learning, discussing progress, rewarding progress.	41	54	2

Commentary

On-the-job learning is at the core of apprenticeships. It enables learners to gain training and work-based qualifications while earning a wage. On-the-job learning also benefits employers by cultivating a skilled workforce whose training is directly applicable to their daily experience.

The criteria suggest a large number of areas of good practice, from the planning to the delivery of this component. Aspects of good practice said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents include these:

- on-the-job learning is structured to meet both employer and learner needs and offers a wide range of opportunities to gain evidence of competence and for assessment
- formal practical training is reinforced by workplace activity.

Less well-developed aspects of good practice include:

- planning and integrating on-the-job learning into the ILP
- providing learning opportunities in the workplace for formal, practical training on specific occupational aspects, challenging tasks, opportunities to gain additional qualifications
- good training facilities and resources
- training and experience of workplace staff in relation to the support needs of learners
- inclusion of company in-house training in providers' quality assurance arrangements
- emphasis on the development of new competencies
- allocation of specific time to consider and record learning at the workplace
- active encouragement of learning by employers.

The survey suggests that the match between the good practice criteria and practice is poor and depends upon the sector and size of employer. There appear to be particular issues concerning quality assurance processes and the training of workplace staff.

Well-developed practice

On-the-job learning is structured to meet both employer and learner needs and offers a wide range of opportunities to gain evidence of competence and for assessment

The providers interviewed generally tried to plan the on-the-job learning and assessments with employers so that both learners' and employers' needs were met. A problem was identified in securing a balance between employers' needs and the trainees' ambitions.

Opportunities for gaining evidence and for assessment were part of the forward planning and target-setting in many of the progress review meetings held by providers interviewed. Most said that some employers could not offer opportunities to meet all competency requirements of the framework but all said they were able to make alternative arrangements through temporary placements with other employers.

Formal practical training is reinforced by workplace activity

The providers interviewed suggested that this practice depended upon the employer and vocational sector. Learners at one of the providers interviewed were largely in people-centred care sectors. The formal training they get is mainly generic, and almost always directly applicable to their placement. For example, in the building at the time of the visit was a group studying patients' rights, and another group role-playing how to manage story reading and games in a nursery. Both these deal with situations to which the learner is likely to be exposed on a daily basis. This approach was not always successful in the business and print sectors where their formal training could not always be synchronised with learners' on-the-job experiences.

Less well established practice

On-the-job learning is planned as an integral part of the ILP

The providers indicated a possible barrier to planning on-the-job learning as integral to the ILP. Standards of training varied across employers to such an extent that not all employers provided sufficient training to cover the NVQ range.

In response to this, some providers gave all their employers an 'on-the-job training programme' which contained all the NVQ requirements. Employers could tick off the elements of training as they were completed by the trainee, and mark at the same time whether the element of training had been completed satisfactorily or well. The training plan includes the time-scale within which the various aspects of training are expected to be completed, and the key skill requirements. Assessors ensured that trainees were making adequate progress. At the end of each visit the assessor leaves the employer a copy of what the trainee has covered to date, the latest review of progress and a plan of what the trainee is expected to cover by the next visit.

Barriers to good practice

Although providers plan on-the-job training as an integral part of the learning programme, the major difficulty is that much of it takes place when the training provider is not present and therefore cannot observe the quality.

Providers' response

Providers work hard on employer engagement and to ensure that the employer is well informed and involved or, failing that, the trainee has a good line manager.

Whether the training on-the-job is of high quality has to be judged by the assessment of the trainee. The training provider sets the trainee targets between each assessment/review visit and the result of assessment provides an indication of the quality of the training the trainee has received since the last visit.

If a trainee is on placement and the on-the-job training is judged to be poor, providers can change the employer. But this is not the case if the trainee is employed.

Providing learning opportunities in the workplace for formal, practical training on specific occupational aspects; challenging tasks; and opportunities to gain additional qualifications

The amount of formal practical training that was offered was seen to depend on the employer. One provider thought that although plenty of training takes place in the employer placements, it is not always formal and therefore not recorded as such. The providers' response to this was to involve employers more in the review process so that informal training can be acknowledged and recorded.

Within the employer/provider from the care sector in the sample, specific occupational aspects were routinely covered, such as the need to communicate and build relationships with parents both face to face and on the telephone. To this end, the provider organises parents' evenings, in which trainers can meet parents in a relaxed atmosphere.

Ensuring that employers set learners challenging tasks was felt to be problematic by the providers. Employers are sometimes reluctant to let trainees carry out challenging tasks and instead give them routine, menial tasks to perform. On other occasions, employers set tasks which are too challenging and complain if they have not been carried out satisfactorily. The providers' response is to work with employers to try to get this balance right.

The providers visited occasionally offer additional activities designed to broaden the trainees' experience and improve their employability. These feature, for example, product manufacturers and include training on products and product development, and customer service. Such activities are frequently not certificated. Employers support and often include such additional activities in order to motivate their staff and to encourage staff retention.

The opportunity to gain additional qualifications to enhance employability is common in some sectors, such as the public sector and with particular employers, especially the larger organisations. One provider stated that employers in the care sector often operate training events for all their staff in aspects such as first aid, drug awareness and lifting techniques. Whenever possible, such programmes are also attended by an assessor who assesses the quality of the training, and the experience of the trainee.

However, some providers, employers and learners consider that the current framework requirements are arduous enough, not leaving much room for gaining additional qualifications.

Barriers to good practice

- Companies will not always provide extra time for trainees to gain additional qualifications.
- Employers are concerned that where trainees gain additional qualifications and become too well qualified that they will seek alternative employment.
- Some managers feel threatened if the trainee becomes too well qualified. In estate agency or customer service training, for example, a trainee with an AMA, may be better qualified than the manager.
- On occasions providers are asking managers to train the trainee on an aspect of work in which managers themselves are not well informed.

Providers' response

- Providers work to persuade the employers that training will add value to the company and that a well-trained employer will enhance the company.
- It is essential that the training provider/assessors establish good relationships with the employer.
- Providers give the employer training materials and information to enable them to provide the training.

Good workplace training facilities and resources

This was thought to be dependent on the resources of the employer. Large or public service employers were most likely to have dedicated training facilities.

Some providers interviewed had worked with their employers for some years and selected only those employers who were able to provide good training in good facilities; who understand what is involved in the training of apprentices and give their full commitment. Other providers within hairdressing training run their own commercial salon in which technical skills can be enhanced.

With regard to workplace resources, providers thought that employers did not always understand what is needed and what training materials are adequate. The providers gave employers and learners the necessary materials where possible but felt that it was largely out of their hands.

Off the job and on-the-job training are coordinated and mutually supportive

Many providers within the sample interviewed built good and close relationships with their employers. Some providers ran employer workshops in which the employers are kept up to date about training and qualification issues and the providers send termly reports on the trainee's progress to the employer. Telephone contact can also be maintained if there are problems, such as poor attendance.

If all else fails, providers cease to work with the employer. This action was thought necessary as trainees leave the employer and cease training if the provider is not seen to be working hard on their behalf to secure high quality training leading to the completion of the full qualification.

Workplace staff are appropriately trained, qualified and experienced, and understand the qualification and support needs of learners

All of the providers interviewed indicated that this area required further development. It was thought that some managers were not well qualified and were not sufficiently experienced to be able to provide adequate training. To address this, many of those interviewed were offering in-service training and assessor training for work-based staff. Some were offering mentor training and were occasionally using the Employer Training Pilot for this purpose.

Although some providers had detailed training programmes for employers, there was no guarantee that the programme attendee would actually be the employee dealing with learners.

Inclusion of company in-house training in providers' QA arrangements

During the interviews, this aspect of good practice caused mixed reactions. Many of the providers thought that this practice would be too intrusive.

The quality of the employers' training was often assessed simply on the basis of the trainees' progress as judged by the assessor. The provider relied on what the trainee reports back during assessments, reviews and surgeries. In addition, the provider questioned the trainees on how they are being treated, whether health and safety regulations are being met, and that there is no discrimination in the workplace. Providers carry out a pre-placement health and safety check/risk assessment, and give employers a copy of the provider's equal opportunities policy. Interviewed providers acknowledge that this is an area they need to consider more carefully.

Learners are allocated specific time on-the-job and encouraged by their employer to consider their learning, complete a 'learning log' and build their portfolio

All interviewed providers encouraged this with mixed success. The best employers actively encouraged learning by allowing time for learning, discussing progress and rewarding progress for example by giving a pay rise on completion of units. However, these practices can rely on the presence of a conscientious supervisor who ensures that there is time for all these elements, and that the trainee experiences a variety of tasks to ensure his or her development within the NVQ.

Additionality and enrichment

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Employers enable learners to achieve additional skills and or qualifications.	37	56	6
Additional activities are provided to support learner's personal and career development.	36	52	8
Learners have easy access to added-value training elements that are relevant to the needs of the particular employer.	41	45	11
Learners are encouraged to enter skills competitions.	24	48	25

Commentary

Additionality and enrichment can be achieved through developing additional skills and/or qualifications or participation in learning activity outside the Apprenticeship framework that will enhance their employability and support their personal development. Good practice in this area can help learners distinguish themselves within the labour market and bring added value to their employer.

The criteria identified areas of good practice in this aspect of delivery of Apprenticeships. No aspects of good practice were said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents. All aspects listed need further development, these being:

- employers enabling learners to achieve additional skills or qualifications
- provision of activities to support personal and career development
- easy access by learners to added-value training of relevance to the needs of particular employers
- entries in skills competitions.

In some cases good practice was found to be tied to particular sectors. During the interviews it was found that learners were nearly always entered into skills competitions within the hairdressing sector.

Due to the time and workload pressures of completing the full framework, providers thought that there was often no room for the learners to take part in additional activities and employers can be reluctant or unable to release their trainees for additional time. Providers also felt discouraged from offering additional activities due to the additional bureaucracy and lack of funding to support them. Providers were reluctant to add additional activities to the learners' ILPs as if they were formally included and the trainees fail to achieve the additional element; the LSC regards this as a failure.

Well established practice

Employers enabling learners to achieve additional skills or qualifications

In contrast to the questionnaire findings, many of the providers interviewed stated that the employers were often enthusiastic about additional skills and qualifications; a land-based college suggested that employers were more interested in the additional qualifications than the main one. These additionality and enrichment activities may be delivered by the employer or by the provider with employer support.

Good practice

P12, a small voluntary organisation in the engineering sector

- All AMAs include the Safety Passport, abrasive Wheels certificate, First Aid and Occupational Health and Safety certificates as part of their first year training.
- The Engineering Foundation Training is extended beyond that required for the particular framework, for example electrical engineering apprentices do additional mechanical training. All AMAs complete all possible PE02 (Performing Engineering Operations) units, not just the 10 required by the NVQ.
- Pipefitting and plumbing AMAs do additional welding and pressure qualifications.
- AMAs who achieve their NC are encouraged to progress to the HNC – and this is expected of all instrumentation AMAs. AMAs who complete C&G etc Technical Certificates are encouraged to take a NC as a follow-up.

Provision of activities to support personal and career development

One provider took all new starters on a day trip during induction to assist their social development. When these learners came to the end of their FMA, staff from careers organisations were brought in to talk to them. At the end of AMA programmes, further career opportunities were discussed and help given with UCAS and job application forms. Another provider within the care sector organised external speakers from the industry and arranged visits to local special schools and Centre of Excellence.

Good practice

P24, a private provider in the engineering sector

All MAs get the chance of a week's residential outward bound activity in Wales. It is designed to support and obtain evidence for the 'soft' key skills. The outcomes from this activity are assessed and recorded by means of a 'distance travelled' form.

Easy access by learners to added-value training of relevance to the needs of particular employers

One example given by an interviewed provider was from within the construction industry. The employer was providing training for driving licenses, seen as essential to be able to travel to work sites, etc.

Financial barriers can hamper the provision of added-value training. One provider contrasted the situation of their college with another in the locality. In the latter, departments operated as cost centres and each department had to justify its income/costs. This provider had a whole college budget and the business centre can use college-wide training provision without extra cost. In the same way, the business centre carried out internal verification on behalf of other departments without making a charge.

Entrance to skills competitions

The potential for this to occur and actual practice varied between providers and the sector areas they covered. Hairdressing and catering MAs were said to be almost always involved in skills competitions, even if only locally.

A training manager from a construction provider had been involved with the Skills Olympics in the past and recognised the value of skills competitions. He suggested that it is particularly difficult to promote competitions when AMAs are working for contractors. They are likely to be moved between sites, and under pressure to work productively. However, this provider was keen to promote skills competitions further with their managing employer group.

On-programme assessment

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Assessments are well-planned and scheduled in advance.	80	18	0.7
Arrangements for assessment are developed jointly by the training provider and the employer or work-based assessor.	73	22	2
Direct observation evidence is supported by witness statements, and other evidence, from the workplace.	82	16	0
Workplace assessment is carried out by work-based, or occupationally appropriate, assessors who understand the workplace context.	88	10	0
The organisation and operation of all assessment processes are subject to rigorous internal verification procedures that include:			
generous sampling of learners' work	86	12	0.7
frequent observation of workplace assessments	80	18	0.7
internal assessment records	86	12	0.7
rapid feedback to assessors	85	13	0.7
arrangements to share good practice	77	20	0.7
arrangements to ensure prompt action arising from external verification.	86	11	0
Where there are no work-based assessors, arrangements are in place to secure assessment at short notice, at distant sites, or in other individual circumstances.	54	22	9
Learners, trainers, assessors and workplace supervisors have a good understanding of the assessment process and evidence production.	74	24	0.7
Assessments include formal checking of candidates' understanding.	88	10	0.7
Portfolios are simply structured, easily understood by all interested parties, yet comprehensive in content.	77	20	0.7
Progress in building the portfolio, and the quality of its contents, is one focus of progress review meetings.	75	22	2
Portfolio evidence relating to all aspects of the framework is gathered at the earliest opportunity.	75	20	2

Commentary

The on-programme assessment carried out in the apprentices' workplace identifies and records the learners' progress in reaching a requisite level of skills, competence and confidence in relation to their chosen framework and its NVQ components.

All but one of the good practice aspects listed in the questionnaire were said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents. The following were said to be in place:

- well-planned assessments, scheduled in advance
- jointly developed arrangements for assessments
- witness statements etc from the workplace in support of direct observation
- conduct of workplace assessment by assessors with understanding of the workplace context
- assessment processes that are subject to rigorous internal verification
- all interested parties with a good understanding of the assessment process and evidence production
- assessment including formal checking of candidate's understanding
- portfolios simply structured, comprehensive and comprehensible
- progress in completing the portfolio featured in review meetings
- evidence relating to all aspects of the framework gathered at the earliest opportunity.

Fewer than 60% of respondents claimed to have arrangements to secure assessment at short notice or in distant locations fully in place.

The site visits found an increased emphasis on procedures and documentation supporting the questionnaire findings. However, assessment planning was again seen to vary by the size and sector of the employer.

Well-developed practice

Well-planned assessments, scheduled in advance

This area of practice met with mixed responses from the providers visited. The ability to be able to plan an assessment schedule depended on the predictability of the learner's experience and this depended on the size of the employer and the vocational sector. One small private provider covering a range of sectors stated that in most cases they can plan with the employer a schedule of assessments six months in advance; what day, who they will see, and what they will be assessing. This provider felt they are 'very close' to employers, who understand what they and the learners needed. If necessary where an employer does not have an appropriate training and assessment opportunity assessments are planned to take place in-house.

However, it was questioned whether this degree of forward planning was responsive to the learners' needs. Another provider suggested that it was good practice to only assess trainees when they are ready and this may not fit with an assessment schedule planned too far in advance. This provider liaises closely with the employers to arrange the appropriate times for assessment.

Jointly developed arrangements for assessments

Some of the providers visited, asked the employer to provide a training plan for the trainee covering the next three months. This plan is reviewed by the provider and used to coordinate the on- and off-the-job training and assessment.

Direct observation evidence is supported by witness statements, and other evidence, from the workplace

Most providers were satisfied that learners had achieved a competence if it had been directly observed and verified through at least two other forms of evidence, such as witness statements, video clips or company records etc. One provider said that its apprentices increasingly wanted to send in photographic evidence via their mobile phones.

Workplace assessment is carried out by work-based assessors, or occupationally appropriate assessors with a full understanding of the workplace context

Most assessments within the providers interviewed were carried out by assessors employed by the training provider. Some providers insisted that they would only 'trust' their own assessors, but others said they were encouraging more work-based assessors, and were offering free training for the appropriate qualifications.

The organisation and operation of all assessment processes are subject to rigorous internal verification procedures that include:

- generous sampling of learners' work
- frequent observation of workplace assessments
- detailed internal assessment records
- rapid feedback to assessors
- arrangements to share good practice
- arrangements to ensure prompt action arising from external verification.

The providers interviewed generally claimed that all the above points are in place. Internal Verification procedures were an integral part of the provider's quality assurance systems, and these had often been the result of considerable redevelopment following poor inspection outcomes. Internal Verification procedures are often subject to a rigorous audit system to ensure the procedures are being followed.

Good practice

P18, a small private provider, that covers a cross section of sectors

- The lead verifier and quality manager each observe assessments being carried out. On average, each assessor is observed (at short notice) about once each month. Feedback is given to the assessor on the day of the observation. Assessment records are checked by the LV, the lead verifier, and the quality manager each month. They look for the quality of the reporting of the assessment, the accuracy and detail of the assessment, and each learner's progress in achieving their targets.
- P18 holds 'wash-up' workshops of all assessors, LVs etc each month to review progress and share good practice. There is also a company monthly newsletter that includes information about assessment, and inspection. It also contains a 'good practice teaching forum' page in each issue.

Good practice**P1, a large private provider that caters for a range of sectors**

Some 20% of every trainee's portfolio is regularly sampled. At the beginning of the year the provider's quality manager determines the sampling strategy, including which units will be sampled. One unit for each level of NVQ the assessor is assessing is identified for every assessor which will be sampled as a quality control unit.

Good practice**P2, a small private provider in the health and social care sector**

All departments attend meetings to discuss quality matters and to share good practice. External meetings organised by the LSDA, LSC and other bodies are also regularly attended. All departments attend standardisation meetings; there are termly internal verifier forums and annual assessor forums.

All interested parties have a good understanding of the assessment process and evidence production

The providers interviewed stated that the above was always part of their learners' formal induction. For work-based personnel, methods varied from an informal meeting accompanied by a programme handbook, to formal training sessions.

Good practice

P17, a large FE college which covers a range of sectors, employs 'liaison officers' in each occupational area. These are part-time employees (0.5–0.7 posts). Each liaison officer is responsible for liaising with about 40 trainees. Their function is to liaise between the trainee, employer and the curriculum tutors. They:

- help coordinate the on-and off-the-job training
- explain the training and its implications at the beginning of the training programme to the trainees and employers
- are responsible for reviewing the trainees' progress (as a result the reviews are carried out on time, which is not always the case with tutors who have so many other tasks and functions)
- attend portfolio sessions
- receive reports from the tutors on the trainees' progress, which they have with them when they visit the trainees on site
- have a full and objective view of the trainees' progress and prevent the trainee playing one side off (the college) against the other (the employer).

Assessment includes formal checking of candidate's understanding

This was said by the providers interviewed to be always the case, and insisted upon by most awarding bodies. Providers use a standard set of questions associated with each assessment. Testing can be oral – in which case the assessor chooses from the question bank and asks questions during the assessment, or maybe through a formal written test taken immediately after the assessment. Reports on the testing of understanding are included on the assessment record.

Portfolios

Portfolios are simply structured, comprehensive and comprehensible

Most providers interviewed had redesigned their portfolios in recent years to be more comprehensible by learners, employers, and verifiers. Practices varied on having separate portfolios for NVQ, Technical Certificate and key skills purposes, or having one central file that is cross-referenced for each purpose.

Progress in completing the portfolio is a feature of review meetings

This aspect was generally in place for all the providers interviewed – and had often arisen because of inspection criticisms in the past. Some of the providers visited had developed simple charts to log the learners' progress through the framework including portfolio completion, designed to highlight any problems.

Evidence relating to all aspects of the framework is gathered at the earliest opportunity

The providers interviewed told trainers at the very beginning of their programme what was required of them. The need to gather evidence at the earliest opportunity is impressed upon the learners.

Less well established practice

Where there are no work-based assessors, arrangements are in place to secure assessment at short notice, at distant sites, or in other individual circumstances

From the interviews it was found that when no work-based assessors were in place, the providers' trainers carried out the assessments. In this instance there were no issues relating to the need for the provider's staff to liaise with assessors based in the workplace. Instead the interaction occurred between the trainee and the trainer who could respond flexibly to the trainees' need for assessment. However, providers with large numbers of trainees find it difficult and expensive to operate in this way.

Providers within different vocational areas operated different models of assessment. Hairdressing and catering providers often had salons/restaurant operating on a commercial basis providing frequent opportunities for on-the-job assessment. Within the care and business sectors short notice assessment was found to be relatively easy to implement, and therefore special arrangements were infrequent. In the motor vehicle sector, however, particularly for small employers, training and assessment opportunities often depended on having an appropriate vehicle or task in the workshop. In these cases, assessments were often arranged at short notice (often a few days in advance or sometimes a few hours). Assessments could be instigated by the employer or learner. In one provider, learners knew that assessors were available at short notice on two particular days of the week, and were encouraged to look to for assessment opportunities on these days.

Recording evidence and building portfolios

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Requirements for recording evidence and building portfolios are understood by all concerned.	72	26	0
Direct observational assessments result in written records in an appropriate form, supported by evidence.	88	11	0
All sources of evidence are used to contribute to key skills evidence.	54	35	4
Innovative methods of recording evidence are used where appropriate.	53	39	3

Commentary

The learners' portfolio is a central part of the apprenticeship process within which evidence of learning and experience is recorded, contributing towards the learners' framework components.

Aspects of good practice said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents include:

- all concerned understand the requirements for recording evidence and building portfolios
- written records result from observational assessments.

Less well-developed aspects of good practice include:

- all sources of evidence contribute to key skills competence
- innovative methods of recording evidence are used.

The match between the criteria and the questionnaire responses was relatively strong. All stakeholders were thought to understand the process and observational assessments resulting in written evidence. However, further development was needed to ensure all possible sources of evidence were used and the introduction of innovative methods. On this last aspect, the interviews with providers yielded some good practice, with diverse methods used to record evidence.

Well-developed practice

Understanding of requirements for recording evidence and building portfolios by all concerned

Most providers from the interviews put considerable effort into understanding the requirements for recording evidence and building portfolios and said they had improved practice and understanding over the last few years. The interviewees stated that the requirements were usually stressed at the beginning of the training to learners and then reinforced on a regular basis.

Written records with supporting evidence result from observational assessments

This was another area that providers stated had been subject to much improvement in recent years. Observational assessments resulted in a written observation report which included a written description of what had been observed, and a reference to the elements, national standards and scope covered.

Typical problems that had been faced included the predominance of evidence in the form of job cards signed off by supervisors, witness statements etc. In response to this the interviewed providers held training sessions for work-based assessors on the importance of direct observation, and the methodology of recording.

Barriers to good practice

Some providers commented on the bureaucracy burden of evidence requirements. Direct observation may be well done but it is often difficult to provide the evidence of, for example, a question-and-answer session.

Providers' response

- A technology-based process would include an online portfolio which contained records of practical work, questions and answers etc through the use, for example, of video clips, digital photos and voiceover.
- Currently some of these techniques are used but there is a difficulty in bringing all the material together in a portfolio.

Less well established practice

Using all sources of evidence to contribute to key skills competence

The interviews established that there were different practices between providers. Some providers use evidence from all aspects of the learners' experience while others have very controlled systems where the evidence is contrived from off-the-job activities. Both methods claim good key skills pass rates. This result may be possible as a result of the detailed attention being paid to key skills rather than to the particular delivery ideology.

Barrier to good practice

P12, a small voluntary organisation in the engineering sector

One third party provider uses the first year Engineering Foundation Training and NC evidence for key skills (there are no separate key skills 'lessons' as all AMAs have C+ maths and English at GCSE). In the last intake, all AMAs at this provider had successfully completed the key skills portfolio requirements by the end of their Foundation training year. At another third-party provider, P12 learners are 'taught' key skills in separate classes together with learners from other vocational areas and the evidence is obtained from artificial exercises unrelated to engineering. P12 has now drawn its third-party providers together to develop a scheme where all the required key skills evidence is drawn from the Foundation training and other first-year activities.

Use of innovative methods of recording evidence

Most providers interviewed were able to provide examples of where photographic or video evidence had been accepted. Learners at one particular provider were encouraged to send photographic evidence related to competencies using the image function on their mobile phones.

Good practice

P24, a private provider in the engineering sector

About 16 of P24's MAs are working with a paperless portfolio system. This is part of a pilot operated by Nottingham LSC. Laptops are provided for assessors. Videos of interviews, assessments etc can be entered as evidence, as can the outcomes of assessments and tests. The system provides a clear running log of progress through the framework to date. P24 are enthusiastic about the system and say it has particular advantage for learners with some learning difficulties (eg dyslexia).

Progression and employability

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Learners are given progressively challenging tasks and responsibilities in the workplace to motivate them to succeed and further develop.	51	44	3
Learners' career and progression aspirations are discussed with employers and providers, and taken into account when planning later stages of their programmes.	53	40	4
Apprentices have learning or professional development plans that extend beyond their apprenticeship.	22	38	35
Additional coaching and qualifications are provided to improve learners' employability.	40	41	15
Progression to further education and training, higher qualifications and professional recognition is encouraged.	52	35	9
A higher qualification route in a related occupational area is available to secure progression into, through and beyond the modern apprenticeship, for example from FMA programme to AMA to Foundation degree.	47	38	6

Commentary

Successful experiences during their apprenticeship can encourage learners to enter further learning. Clear and effective support and guidance should be available to help facilitate this choice.

No aspects of good practice were said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents. Good practice may therefore need developing in:

- giving learners progressively more challenging tasks and responsibilities in the workplace
- providing additional coaching or qualifications to improve employability
- encouraging progression beyond the MA programme
- availability of a higher qualification route in a related occupational area
- taking into account learners' career and progression aspirations
- providing learners with learning plans that extend beyond their apprenticeship.

This was particularly striking in the case of the development of learning plans beyond AMA level. This area may receive increased attention within the next year due to the renewed focus on apprenticeships facilitating progression to HE, especially in the form of Foundation degrees.

The findings from the interviews with providers largely supported the results from the questionnaire with little evidence of post-AMA progression planning. This was however thought to differ by sector, with some fields such as engineering having a tradition of further study.

Learners are given progressively challenging tasks and responsibilities in the workplace to motivate them to succeed and further develop

It was suggested by some providers within the sample interviewed that hairdressing employers effectively carried out this practice, depending largely on their assessment of the learners' abilities. Within the interviews, respondents sometimes associated this point with the appropriateness of short-term targets.

Good practice

P7, a private provider that covers a range of sectors

One solicitors' practice moves each learner round its departments, giving excellent support, and raises learners' salaries as they demonstrate that they can take on more responsibilities.

To ensure that this aspect is further developed to the benefit of both learner and employer would require the 'buy-in' of the employer. To enable this, the learner's career and progression aims need to be discussed with employers and providers, and later stages of their programmes planned to support these aspirations and the needs of the employer. A concern emerged from those interviewed that discussions that do take place are often limited to encouraging employers of FMAs to allow them to move on to an AMA. Some providers also thought that employers would not like discussions to extend beyond induction and progress reviews as this might encourage the apprentices to look for better progression opportunities elsewhere.

Apprentices have learning or professional development plans that extend beyond their apprenticeship

The providers interviewed considered this practice to be rare unless the apprentice was employed by a large established organisation in which all employees had continuing professional development (CPD) plans and regular appraisals. However, a hairdressing provider based within an FE college is currently preparing to offer Level 4 qualifications and staff are keen to improve their progression practices. They saw no particular barriers to introducing a CPD plan for each learner at induction, encouraging them to take additional courses and continue their learner beyond their FMA/AMA.

Another provider, instead of incorporating a CPD plan into the induction of the FMA/AMA framework, was conducting 'exit' interviews to encourage progression at the end of the programme.

Good practice

P1, a large private provider which caters for a range of sectors

At the end of the training the provider conducts 'exit interviews' to determine how the provider and employer can further help the trainee. This is all documented. The provider has employed new staff and introduced a new role of enrolment officer who interview the trainees and follow them through their programme. These people work alongside the assessors and provide the trainees with another point of contact.

Additional coaching and qualifications are provided to improve learners' employability

One provider gave coaching on job searching skills, interview techniques, and help with application letters and forms. Another provider in the childcare sector offered additional qualifications in food hygiene and managing challenging behaviour. They also encouraged their trainees to attend courses in paediatric first aid and an NSPCC course in child abuse.

Good practice

Providers have attempted to overcome employers' reluctance to release trainees from the workplace for additional training by:

- encouraging employers to cover as much as possible on-the-job
- persuading trainees of the need to devote more time to training out of the workplace
- providing facilities off-the-job at lunch times and at weekends
- providing self-study materials, particularly for key skills.

Progression to further education and training, higher qualifications and professional recognition is encouraged

The encouragement of this practice could rely on progression routes being available. As one provider remarked, there is no AMA in insurance because the Technical Certificate has yet to be designed and agreed. This is affecting the trainees' career progression.

The providers interviewed all stated that they strongly encouraged progression from FMA to AMA, although not always with success. For example, one provider had no learners' progress from FMA to AMA in business studies – this may be as the trainees were able to enter full-time employment on the basis of their NVQ2, a finding from an earlier LSDA study.⁸

Most providers interviewed were in the early stages of considering routes beyond Level 3 (though some already offer more generic progression – for example management qualifications). They were building relations with local higher education institutions (HEIs) and examining opportunities for offering Foundation degrees.

Good practice

P12, a voluntary organisation specialising in engineering, encourages all AMAs who complete the minimum Level 3 'Technical Certificate' to study an alternative Level 3 course (for example Edexcel NC following a C&G qualification at Level 3), or to follow a NC with a HNC. All instrumentation AMAs start on an HNC while in their framework as this is the expected level of qualification in the industry. Progression onto HNCs was recognised as a key strength by ALI inspectors.

8

*NVQs within FE:
an investigation into
full-time NVQ provision
and uptake in the
FE sector*

Management of training programmes

Criteria for good practice and current state of play	Percentage of providers indicating practice is:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Learners' experiences and achievements are the central concern of management and training.	85	13	0.7
All staff involved in learning and assessment are appropriately qualified.	72	27	0
Data related to learner attendance, retention, part and full achievement is systematically collected to inform both learners progress and meet the management information needs of the provider and the funder.	75	22	1
All available external data sources are used as comparators to self-assess the provider's performance.	52	37	8
Value added measures are employed as an indicator of relative success.	37	38	14
Providers systematically develop their staff to meet new roles and responsibilities.	79	20	0.7
Self-evaluation and self-assessment are used continuously to monitor provision, anticipate problems and effect improvements. In particular the views of learners, employers, assessors and verifiers are gathered frequently, considered promptly and action is taken rapidly.	80	18	0
Employers are involved in wider aspects of the programme for example advising on the content of off-the-job learning, observing off-the-job learning sessions, and monitoring/evaluating the learning programme.	30	49	19
Targets are set for recruitment (including from under-represented groups), success, retention and progression.	65	33	1
Written agreements set out the roles and responsibilities of provider, employer and any third party provider.	85	12	1
Training given by third party providers is closely monitored.	58	17	7
On- and off-the-job learning sessions are observed by trained observers and feedback is given to the trainers/teachers.	68	27	2
Third party providers are fully included within the providers' quality assurance arrangements, and in action and development planning.	45	24	9

Commentary

It is essential that the apprenticeship is effectively managed, integrating the needs of the learners, employers and framework requirements. Management of the process can lead to continual improvements benefiting all stakeholders and ensuring the collection of data relating to aspects of the framework for analysis.

Aspects of good practice said to be fully in place by over 60% of respondents include the following:

- learners' experiences are the central concern of management
- all staff are appropriately qualified and supported to meet new roles and responsibilities
- data to support attendance and completion is collected and targets are set for recruitment, success and progression
- self-evaluation is used to monitor and improve provision
- written agreements set out respective roles of all players
- on- and off-the-job learning sessions are observed by trained assessors, and feedback given.

Less well-developed aspects of good practice include:

- the use of external data to compare and assess performance
- use of value-added measures as an indicator of relative success
- involvement of employers in wider aspects of the programme
- training provided by third parties is closely monitored, and included in quality assurance arrangements.

The majority of the providers responding to the questionnaire believed that they were operating good practice across a broad range of measures. This was particularly evident within private providers and employer providers but less so within local authorities and FE and tertiary colleges.

A correlation analysis to test the relationship between the providers' perception of their delivery of MAs and their leadership and management grades received under ALI inspection found no statistically significant relationship. However, descriptive statistics indicated there might be a slight relationship. This can be seen in that the providers' obtained relatively high leadership and management grades and the majority indicated that they were operating good practice across the broad range of questionnaire measures.

There was a strong consensus from the providers returning the questionnaire that measures were fully in place within some of these areas whereas other aspects were thought to need improvement. A key strength was thought to be placing learners as central to the concerns of management and training and the provision of written agreements defining all stakeholder roles.

A development need was however identified in the integrated involvement of employers throughout the management of the programme and the uses of value-added measures.

Well-developed practice

Learners' experiences are the central concern of management of training

Providers' responses to this criterion were mixed. One college provider raised the difficulty of ensuring this centrality when staff responsible to different managers delivered different aspects of the framework and the work-based learning manager has overall responsibility but little direct authority.

Another provider pointed out that maximising funding had to be the central concern of management 'otherwise there might not be a training provider'.

All staff are appropriately qualified and supported to meet new roles and responsibilities

Some staff within a number of the private providers visited were fully qualified teachers. However, there was found to be a continuing problem in the need for more staff development and too few opportunities for this to take place. Providers also considered that there was a need for more staff to have an awareness of and interest in quality assurance matters and a need for staff to monitor and review their own practices.

Data to support attendance and completion is collected and targets are set for recruitment, success and progression

The providers interviewed said that learner performance data was improving, but was not yet entirely satisfactory. Central systems were now able to provide data for the LSC.

Barriers were being overcome to improve the use of the data. At one provider, managers were not yet proficient in the use of this data internally, particularly for roll on-roll off provision, and opportunities to improve the rigour of self-assessment, target-setting etc were missed. In response to this, Managers and key staff were undergoing additional training.

The majority of providers were routinely setting targets for recruitment including for under-represented groups, success and retention rates and progression rates.

Good practice

P3, a large private provider in the business sector

P3 set overall targets for recruitment, retention and achievement of NVQs and frameworks. These are broken down into targets for each of its centres. Recruitment targets include separate targets for those from ethnic minority groups (based on the 17–21 census population data for the area served by each centre) and for people with disabilities.

Performance against all targets is checked monthly and is the subject of management meetings with centre managers. P3 have also been able to consider the achievement of these two groups compared to the whole (and between male and female learners). Both groups under-perform – and P3 are considering what additional support may be needed.

Self-evaluation and self-assessment are used continuously to monitor provision, anticipate problems and effect improvements. In particular the views of learners, employers, assessors and verifiers are gathered frequently, considered promptly and action is taken rapidly

It would appear from the questionnaire results and from the interviews that much good practice is now taking place within this area. Some of the providers interviewed attributed this good practice to a response to a particular problem. Quality assurance was raised in the ALI Chief Inspector's report for 2002/03 as a particular area of concern with 94% of poor providers having poor quality assurance processes compared to 48% of good providers. Self assessment may therefore have been subject to increased activity aimed at improvement over the last year. For one provider in the sample, quality assurance was recognised as a general weakness in their recent inspection, in particular the lack of consideration of the views of partners in training. The provider now has a central quality assurance unit, which is developing improved systems for determining and acting upon partners' views.

Another provider had developed a multiple assessment approach. Learners complete detailed questionnaires on different aspects of their programmes. The questionnaires are designed to elicit comment as well as grading, and these comments are analysed as part of the quality assurance processes. Employers also complete questionnaires, and a similar analysis follows. Instructors self-assess every lesson and have to put a commentary on the lesson record and this is an audited part of the quality assurance system. Verifiers and assessors report similarly on every contact with learners. Progress against schemes of work and workplace assessment plans are audited at director level and reported on regularly. Programme teams meet regularly with a director. They consider performance against targets, feedback questionnaires, lesson feedback etc.

A key feature of this provider's system is that the senior management drives the auditing and quality assurance processes, even at programme level. This has contributed to NVQ achievements rising from 35% to 71%, and framework achievement rising from 18% to 68% in two years.

Written agreements set out respective roles of all players

Practice varied widely concerning written agreements. One provider said that there were no written agreements as such but the FMA or AMA agreement provided an outline written agreement between all parties. At least one provider, however, was developing detailed service level agreements with its third party providers to improve inconsistencies criticised at a recent inspection.

On- and off-the-job learning sessions are observed by trained assessors, and feedback given

All providers monitored the off-the job training and gave feedback. All providers knew that third party providers also observed on-the-job training, though they were not party to the detailed outcomes of these observations.

Less well-developed effective practice

The use of external data to compare and assess performance

The interviewed providers said that there was still a paucity of external data relating to WBL. Most were aware of the information now coming from ALI and LSC.

Use of value-added measures as an indicator of relative success

Little positive evidence emerged from the site visits, although much interesting discussion took place about probable LSC requirements for value-added measurements. Providers were generally waiting for a proven system to appear before adopting it.

Good practice

P24, a private provider in engineering

P24 employ an internally devised 'distance traveled' system to encourage learners to improve their performance. All learners, through 1:1 discussion with the Skills for Life tutor, enter their perception of their starting point in a range of skills and qualities (for example oral communication, self confidence etc). These initial 'scores' are used to set out what learners might be able to achieve and where they could eventually go. The form is revisited three times, for an FMA, when perceptions of progress are used to revise goals and ambitions. P24 are sure that the learner's involvement in the process improves their performance. A similar system is used related to the 'outward bound' activity.

Involvement of employers in wider aspects of the programme

None of the providers visited said that they would involve the employers to this extent. Two commented that it was difficult enough getting the employers to understand the basics of the framework. Another said their philosophy was to involve employers as little as possible in the details of the programme.

Training provided by third parties is closely monitored, and included in quality assurance arrangements

Practice varied on the above depending on the type of provider and its internal organisation. In one provider, monitoring of the 'third party' aspects of the programmes (provided by the FE departments in the college) was the responsibility of a newly created quality assurance unit under a senior manager. The WBL manager was as yet unsure what influence she might have on the particular monitoring of WBL aspects.

Good practice

P13, a small private provider specialising health and social care

The training manager is responsible in the first instance for the internal quality assurance arrangements, observing assessors in the workplace and reporting on their performance. But quality assurance is also the responsibility of the Berkshire Training Providers' Network. A full-time member of staff within the BTPN takes overall responsibility for quality assurance across all the providers; ensuring that procedures are in place and are standardised, and observing training.

Appendix 1

Sources for literature review

- ALI (2003)
Successful learning at work
- Anderson T, Metcalf H (2003)
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- McCoshan A, Williams J (2002)
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Delivery of key skills in Modern Apprenticeships
- Shaw S (2002)
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- Taylor S (2001)
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- Weiss C (2001)
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LSDA
- Weiss C, Shirley A (2001)
Encouraging higher recruitment to technician engineering training,
LSDA
- Wiseman J, Roe P, Boothby D (2003)
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Appendix 2

Survey findings

The questionnaire was circulated by post to 783 providers. 144 replies were received, giving a response rate of 18%. Responses came from across a wide range of provider types including private organisations and FE colleges. A breakdown of response rates by provider type is indicated below.

Table 1
Breakdown of responses by type of providers

Type of provider	Number
Private	64
Private sector organisation	1
Local authority	7
Local authority (excluding FE colleges)	4
Employer-led organisation ⁹	20
Employer	8
Charity	10
FE	25
Tertiary	3
Other	2
Total	144

⁹ This refers to employers who provide training for their employees and for other organisations

Perceived demonstration of good practice

The table below shows that the majority of the providers responding to the questionnaire believed that they were operating good practice across the broad range of measures – that is the majority stated that over 60% of the questionnaire measures were ‘fully in place’. The table also indicates some interesting differences by provider type that will be explored later.

Table 2
Reporting of good practice in questionnaire by provider type

Type of provider	Number stating over 60%	Number stating under 60%	Total number
Private	47 (72.3%)	18 (27.7%)	65
Local authority	9 (42.9%)	12 (57.1%)	21
Employer	20 (71.4%)	8 (28.6%)	28
FE and tertiary	8 (28.6%)	20 (71.4%)	28
Total	84 (59.2%)	58 (40.8%)	142 (100%)¹⁰

It was possible to test the correlation between the providers’ perception of their delivery of good practice with the grades they received for leadership and management (L&M) under ALI inspection over the years 2001/03. A correlation analysis was performed with those providers who answered ‘fully in place’ (86/144) in response to the suggested good practice within the questionnaire to over 60% of the questions and their L&M scores. The analysis found that there was no statistically significant relationship between those providers who said that they have over 60% of the good practice measures fully in place and the grades obtained for L&M.

¹⁰ Two providers are excluded from the analysis as they did not provide a ‘type’

However, when the percentages are viewed for the number of providers stating that good practice measures were fully in place and the number achieving good L&M grades it could be extracted that there is a slight relationship. The table below shows that the sample is actually above the national average in terms of L&M grades and Table 2 opposite indicates that the majority of providers felt that the majority of measures were in place indicating a possible relationship between positive self-assessment and high inspection grades.

Table 3

Overall L&M grades for all providers in sample

	Number	%	National average
L&M grades 1 and 2	38	26.4	122 (16.4%)
L&M grades 3	57	39.6	273 (36.7%)
L&M grades 4 and 5	49	34.0	348 (46.8%)
Total	144	100.0	743 (100%)

L&M grades by provider type

By conducting an analysis by provider type it enables us to explore relationships that may be masked by looking at the aggregate level results for all providers. As Table 2 has already indicated, there were differences in how the different types of providers rated their performance across the self-assessment measures. For example, over 70% of private and employer providers thought that they had over 60% of all the good practice measures fully in place compared to just 28% of college-based providers.

Table 4

Overall L&M grades by provider type

	Private	Local authority and charity	Employer	FE and tertiary	National average
L&M grades 1 and 2	10 (15.4%)	7 (33.3%)	6 (21.4%)	14 (50.0%)	122 (16.4%)
L&M grade 3	29 (44.6%)	6 (28.6%)	9 (32.1%)	12 (42.9%)	273 (36.7%)
L&M grades 4 & 5	26 (40.0%)	8 (38.1%)	13 (46.4%)	2 (7.1%)	348 (46.8%)

The table above demonstrates the variation in distribution of L&M grades attained by the questionnaire respondents by provider type. Within the sample responding to the questionnaire it would appear that 50% of FE and tertiary colleges achieve the top L&M grades compared to only 15% of private providers. 46% of employers and employer-led organisations are graded 4 and 5 by L&M inspection compared to 7% of FE and tertiary colleges. However, when this is compared to the providers' self-assessments there would appear to be some disparities. For example, the FE colleges in the sample were more likely to score L&M grades 1 and 2 than the rest of the provider types, yet were least likely to say they were operating good practice overall. Similarly, 72% of private providers stated they had the majority of good practice measures fully in place yet they had the lowest percentage of grade 1 and 2 out of all the provider types.

Appendix 3

Sample of providers

Code	Sector	Type of provider	Number of FMAs	Number of AMAs	LSC region	Grade
P1	Hair & Beauty	Private	36	1	South West	2
	Business		37	6		
	Retail		41	4		
	H & SC		36	41		
	Hospitality		21	5		
P2	H & SC	Private	38	14	South West	2
P3	Business	Private	195	168	East Midlands	3
P4	Hair & Beauty	FE college	30	4	North West	4
P5	Land-based provision	Voluntary organisation	195	65	East	2
P6	H & SC	FE college	139	77	West Midlands	4
P7	Business	Private	2	22	Yorkshire and Humber	2
	Retail			5		
	Hair & Beauty		48	128		
P8	Business	Private	24	13	South East	3
	Hair & Beauty		61	16		
	Retail		101	9		
P9	Engineering	Voluntary organisation		69	East	3
P10	H & SC	Voluntary organisation	25	7	West Midlands	3
P11	Construction	FE college	8		East	3
	Engineering		16	16		
	Business		24	11		
	Hair & Beauty		65	5		
	H & SC		8	3		
	Retail	3				
P12	Engineering	Voluntary organisation		42	Yorkshire and Humber	4
P13	H & SC	Private	8	17	South East	3
P14	Construction	FE college	155	147	Yorkshire and Humber	2
P15	Engineering	Private	27	19	North East	3
	Business		41	28		

Code	Sector	Type of provider	Number of FMAs	Number of AMAs	LSC region	Grade																																																																																									
P15	Engineering	Private	27	19	North East	3																																																																																									
	Business		41	28			P16	H & SC	Private	24	48	South East	4	P17	Hair & Beauty	FE college	53		East	3	Motor Industry	24	16	Business	15	3	Hospitality	10	1	Engineering	22	24	P18	Engineering	Private	4		West Midlands	4	Business	16		Retail	13	3	P19	Hair & Beauty	Private	68	19	South East	3	P20	Business	Private	66	4	Essex	4	P21	Engineering	Private	113	121	Greater London	3	P22	Business	Voluntary organisation	14		North East	3	H & SC	31	9	P23	Business	Tertiary college	36	9	South West	1	Hair & Beauty	5	1	H & SC	9	1	Hospitality	5		P24	Engineering	Private
P16	H & SC	Private	24	48	South East	4																																																																																									
P17	Hair & Beauty	FE college	53		East	3																																																																																									
	Motor Industry		24	16																																																																																											
	Business		15	3																																																																																											
	Hospitality		10	1																																																																																											
	Engineering		22	24																																																																																											
P18	Engineering	Private	4		West Midlands	4																																																																																									
	Business		16																																																																																												
	Retail		13	3																																																																																											
P19	Hair & Beauty	Private	68	19	South East	3																																																																																									
P20	Business	Private	66	4	Essex	4																																																																																									
P21	Engineering	Private	113	121	Greater London	3																																																																																									
P22	Business	Voluntary organisation	14		North East	3																																																																																									
	H & SC		31	9																																																																																											
P23	Business	Tertiary college	36	9	South West	1																																																																																									
	Hair & Beauty		5	1																																																																																											
	H & SC		9	1																																																																																											
	Hospitality		5																																																																																												
P24	Engineering	Private	83	7	East Midlands	3																																																																																									

Appendix 4

Criteria for good practice in the delivery of Modern Apprenticeships

Criteria for good practice	Assessment of your provision:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Programme planning			
All partners in the training have a full understanding of the framework and its components, and their roles and responsibilities within them, in particular:			
the trainer representatives are occupationally qualified and fully cognisant with the framework			
the employer representatives are those directly involved in the training			
the language used is appropriate to partner (employer, learner) not the framework jargon			
all partners have a clear understanding of the learning opportunities offered by the workplace at the planning stage, and of any limitations in these opportunities			
early planning ensures that identified gaps in workplace learning opportunities are filled through additional arrangements			
the training programme makes full use of appropriate in-house training programmes offered by the employer			
planning ensures that the on-the-job learning takes place with role models who have appropriate experience and high expertise.			
Planning of a training programme takes full account of the initial assessment of the learner's prior experience and knowledge, and learning needs. This should include:			
prior experience of employment, and in employment in this occupational area			
prior qualifications			
learner and learning needs identified through the application/recruitment/initial assessment and diagnostic testing processes			
both occupational and key skills.			
Opportunities exist for those apprentices who join a programme and already satisfy some framework requirement (key skills or Technical Certificate) to pursue higher technical or professional qualifications as part of their programmes.			
Programmes are designed particularly to match the needs and limitations of SMEs.			
Programmes are designed to deliver the framework and its included components in a way that best matches the needs of the learner and the employer.			
Long programmes have 'staging posts' along the way that motivate learners to continue.			
Providers can offer programme-led apprenticeships where work-based positions are not available.			
Comments			
Priority for action			

Criteria for good practice	Assessment of your provision:		
Recruitment and pre-recruitment	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Recruitment materials contain a clear factual account of the content and likely experiences of the apprenticeship, aimed at teachers and careers advice personnel, and at young people and their parents.			
Recruitment materials provide basic information about possible careers in the occupational area, including:			
typical wage rates at the different levels			
the different job opportunities available at each level			
the opportunities for pursuing professional qualifications and higher education.			
Providers maintain close links with local Connexions services.			
Recruitment and pre-recruitment activity pays special attention to under-represented groups.			
Recruitment of employers includes emphasising modern apprenticeships (MAs) as a means of developing existing staff as well as recruiting new staff.			
Learners who need additional assistance to meet programme entry requirements are guided onto appropriate pre-apprenticeship programmes.			
Partners in the MA programmes are active supporters of local student apprenticeship schemes.			
Learners have opportunities to sample their projected programme through work experience or trial periods in an occupational area.			
Learners are always recruited to the programme that best suits their needs, level of prior experience and achievement, and probability of success.			
Comments			
Priority for action			

Criteria for good practice Initial assessments	Assessment of your provision:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
<p>Initial assessment is thorough and effective. It includes:</p> <p>diagnostic testing that reveals each learner’s abilities in basic/key skills and indicates support needs</p> <p>assessment that indicates the learner’s abilities and support needs in relation to the Technical Certificate requirements of the programme</p> <p>occupational/aptitude assessment to indicate the learners’ suitability and support needs for projected learning programmes</p> <p>discussion on the progression/job role ambitions of the learner and the opportunities offered by the projected learning programmes</p> <p>determination of the learner’s prior experience and qualifications, and discussion relating to these.</p>			
<p>Initial assessment is used to match learner to employer, or learner to provider (when performed by the employer).</p>			
<p>Induction includes:</p> <p>a comprehensive introduction to the workplace and work roles</p> <p>a full introduction to the roles, responsibilities services and facilities of the training provider, the employer, any off-the-job learning provider, and the learner</p> <p>a complete review of the content of the programme, its requirements for successful completion, and the expectations on the learner.</p>			
<p>Additional induction activities take place when the learner reaches major milestones in the programme, for example moving from NVQ2 to NVQ3.</p>			
<p>Comments</p>			
<p>Priority for action</p>			

Criteria for good practice	Assessment of your provision:		
Managing individual learning plans	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Learners are fully involved in developing their individual learning plan (ILP).			
Learning plans take into account the abilities of the individual learner and the needs of the employer.			
The ILP is a live working document for the learner, provider, trainer (employer) and assessor. It should be regularly reviewed taking into account:			
progress in training and assessment			
changing needs for additional support			
changing learner expectations of progression and job role.			
ILPs are designed to enable review and cater for change.			
ILPs are designed to be easily understood by the employer and the learner.			
Comments			
Priority for action			

Criteria for good practice Supporting the learner	Assessment of your provision:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
The provider and employer have well-established systems to identify and support learners' needs throughout their programme.			
The ILP includes a learner support plan based on initial assessment and diagnostic testing that is clearly linked to both on- and off-the-job aspects of the programme.			
The support plan is reconsidered in regular reviews and revised as necessary.			
Experienced staff, who provide a good role model, act as mentors for learners.			
Workplace supervisors can move the learner to more appropriate learning situations in the workplace.			
The provider offers training for workplace staff to enable them to act as mentors, supervisors and assessors.			
Training provider staff have a flexible pattern of visits to the learner. Visits: are to both on- and off-the-job learning situations include site visits as required include both formal progress review visits and other less formal occasions can be arranged at short notice to include on-the-job assessment opportunities.			
Learners are included in the employer's appraisal system.			
Employers provide incentives for learners to progress on their programme.			
Providers and employers have established links with a wide range of external support agencies.			
Arrangements give a high level of support in the early parts of a programme but this is tapered towards encouraging a higher degree of self-reliance as the programme progresses.			
Learners are encouraged to continue with their learning programmes even if they decide to change employment part-way through.			
Employers offer financial support for essential expenses.			
Employers have well-established policies for equal opportunities, harassment etc, and these are clearly conveyed to the learner.			
Employers provide alternative learning experiences for learners who feel that a particular company placement is unsuited to them.			
The support arrangements available through the provider, employer and any third party provider, are known to each partner and coordinated.			
The provider, employer and any third party provider have strategies for encouraging and supporting apprentices with disabilities, and those who face gender or other social barriers.			
Comments			
Priority for action			

Assessment of your provision:

fully in place	partially in place	not in place
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Criteria for good practice

Reviewing progress and target-setting

Individual learning plans set clear long-term and short-term targets for the learner, based on initial assessment, that are easily understood by learner and employer.

The learner’s progress is frequently reviewed in a process that includes learner, provider, and employer.

Progress reviews are clearly differentiated from those meetings that cover aspects of the contractual requirements for funding, for example equal opportunities and pastoral matters.

The review and target-setting processes include all aspects of the framework, occupational and personal skills, and learner and learning support needs.

Each review includes consideration of varying the ILP, and sets revised short-term and long-term targets as appropriate.

Short-term targets:

set small steps in progress

build on previous skills and competencies

are achievable in realistic time scales.

Review documentation is uncomplicated and easily understood by all parties.

Useful feedback is given to learners at the end of each review and recorded.

Achievements are recorded as adding to the overall progress through the framework, or the NVQ, to motivate learners and work-based assessors.

Learners are encouraged to reflect on their progress and on their learning experiences.

All interested parties receive a copy of the completed review form.

Comments

Priority for action

Criteria for good practice Delivery of key skills requirements	Assessment of your provision:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
The employer, work-based assessors, those involved with off-the-job learning, and the learner fully understand the key skills requirements of the framework and their relevance to employment and progression in the occupational area.			
The employer, work-based assessors, and those involved with off-the-job learning are involved in developing appropriate vocationally-based learning experiences that satisfy the key skills aspects of the framework.			
All partners in delivering key skills use a common framework of descriptive and support materials to ensure apprentices receive consistent messages about key skills and their relevance.			
All partners in delivering key skills have, or have ready access to, staff with appropriate training in key skills.			
Key skills training and assessment begins at the earliest opportunity in the learning programme.			
Opportunities for delivering key skills and obtaining key skills evidence are mapped across the whole learning programme, and particularly across the NVQ-related and other activities in the workplace.			
Special projects designed to satisfy certain key skills learning and/or assessment requirements have a high relevance to the learner's workplace.			
Key skills assessments have a direct occupational relevance.			
Learners receive additional support for key skills development that is rooted in their occupational area or provided by their employer.			
Learner's abilities in key skills are regularly reviewed and the key skills aspects of their learning plan are appropriately modified as necessary.			
Success in key skills requirements is celebrated by provider and employer.			
Comments			
Priority for action			

Criteria for good practice Off-the-job learning	Assessment of your provision:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Providers have the central responsibility for all learning during an apprenticeship.			
Employers are involved in the planning and delivery of off-the-job learning.			
Off-the-job and on-the-job training are coordinated and supportive of each other.			
Third party providers of off-the-job learning are fully integrated into the overall learning programme.			
Employers encourage the learner to use the company as a case study in assignments.			
Employers take a direct part in learning activities away from the workplace.			
Off-the-job learning providers access all available workshops/information provided by sector and awarding bodies about their Technical Certificates.			
Off-the-job learning providers consider the full range of alternative Technical Certificates available from the sector body and select the most appropriate for the learner and employer.			
Technical Certificate training is started as early as possible in the learners' programme.			
Technical Certificates are available through open/distance learning where this would benefit the learner and/or employer.			
The off-the-job learning environment has good simulated training facilities.			
Trainers and teachers match learning styles to the individual learner or groups of learner.			
All involved with delivering off-the-job learning mimic the ethos and adult structures of the workplace, for example with regard to time-keeping and dress codes.			
Formal practical training is closely reinforced by workplace activity.			
Comments			
Priority for action			

Criteria for good practice On-the-job learning	Assessment of your provision:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Providers have the central responsibility for all learning during an apprenticeship.			
On-the-job learning is well-planned as part of the learner's individual learning plan.			
On-the-job learning is structured to meet both the learner's and the employer's needs.			
The workplace offers a wide range of learning opportunities. These might include: periods of formal practical training on specific occupational aspects challenging tasks for learners to complete work-related product training including opportunities to gain additional qualifications to enhance employability good simulative training facilities.			
Off-the-job and on-the-job training are coordinated and mutually supportive.			
The on-the-job learning offers a wide range of opportunities for the learner to gain evidence of competence, and to be assessed in those competencies.			
Workplace staff are appropriately trained, qualified and experienced, and fully understand the qualification and support needs of the learner.			
Workplace training is well-resourced.			
Employers' in-house training arrangements are included in the training providers quality assurance arrangements.			
Emphasis is placed on developing new competencies, rather than gathering evidence and assessment of existing competencies.			
Employers encourage learning, for example by allowing time for learning, discussing progress, rewarding progress.			
Comments			
Priority for action			

Assessment of your provision:

fully in place	partially in place	not in place
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Criteria for good practice

Additionality and enrichment

Employers provide opportunities for learners to achieve additional skills and/or qualifications.

Additional activities are provided that focus on the learner’s personal and/or occupational development.

Learners can access extra added-value training elements that are particularly relevant to the needs of the particular employer.

Learners are encouraged to enter skills competitions.

Comments

Priority for action

Criteria for good practice On-programme assessment	Assessment of your provision:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Assessments are well-planned in advance.			
The arrangements for assessment are developed jointly by the training provider and the employer or work-based assessor.			
Workplace observation is the most common method of assessment.			
Direct observation evidence is supported by witness statements, and other evidence, from the workplace.			
Assessment in the workplace is carried out by work-based assessors, or by occupationally appropriate assessors with a comprehensive understanding of the workplace.			
Where there are no work-based assessors, appropriate arrangements are made to enable assessments to be made at short notice, at distant sites, or in other individual circumstances.			
Learners, trainers, assessors and workplace supervisors each have a good understanding of the assessment process, evidence production and evidence recording.			
Assessments include formal checking on the candidates understanding.			
The organisation and operation of all assessment processes are subject to rigorous internal verification procedures that include:			
generous sampling of learners' work			
frequent observation of workplace assessments			
detailed internal assessment records			
rapid feedback to assessors			
arrangements to share good practice			
arrangements to ensure prompt action arising from external verification.			
Portfolios are simply structured, easily understood by all interested parties, yet comprehensive in content.			
Progress in building the portfolio, and the quality of its contents, is one focus of progress review meetings.			
Portfolio evidence relating to all aspects of the framework is gathered and entered into the portfolio from the start of the programme and at the earliest opportunity.			
Comments			
Priority for action			

<p>Criteria for good practice</p> <p>Recording evidence and building portfolios</p>	Assessment of your provision:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
<p>The requirements for recording evidence and building portfolios are well understood by learners, employers, assessors, and workplace supervisors.</p>			
<p>Direct observational assessments result in written records in a form appropriate for the learner’s portfolio.</p>			
<p>Observational assessment evidence is supported by witness statements, personal statements, and evidence from off-the-job learning.</p>			
<p>All these sources of evidence are used to contribute to key skills evidence.</p>			
<p>Innovative methods of recording evidence are used where there are particular difficulties.</p>			
<p>Comments</p>			
<p>Priority for action</p>			

Criteria for good practice Progression and employability	Assessment of your provision:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
Learners are given increasingly challenging tasks and responsibilities in the workplace that motivates them to succeed and progress.			
Learners' career and progression aims are discussed with employers and providers, and later stages of their programmes are planned to meet their needs.			
Apprentices have learning plans (or professional development plans) reaching beyond their apprenticeship.			
Additional coaching in personal development is provided to improve learners' employability.			
Additional qualifications are encouraged that improve learners' employability.			
Progression to further education and training, or to higher qualification and professional recognition, is encouraged.			
There is a higher qualification route available that is matched to the modern apprenticeship, for example matching a Level 4 with a Level 3 programme, and a Foundation degree programme.			
Comments			
Priority for action			

Criteria for good practice Management of training programmes	Assessment of your provision:		
	fully in place	partially in place	not in place
The experiences and achievements of the learners are the central focus of management.			
All staff involved in learning and assessment are appropriately qualified.			
Data related to learner attendance, retention, partial- and overall-achievement is meticulously collected in a form that satisfies both provider and LSC needs, and the support needs of the learner.			
All available external data sources are used as comparators to self-assess the provider's performance.			
Value-added measures are employed as an indicator of relative success.			
Providers have systems to appropriately develop their staff to meet new roles and responsibilities.			
Self-evaluation and self-assessment are used continuously to monitor the provision, anticipate problems and effect improvements. In particular the views of learners, employers, assessors and verifiers are gathered frequently, considered promptly and action is taken rapidly.			
Employers are involved in wider aspects of the programme, for example advising on the content of off-the-job learning, observing off-the-job learning sessions, and monitoring/evaluating the learning programme.			
Targets are set for recruitment (including from under-represented groups), success and retention rates, and progression rates.			
Written agreements set out the roles and responsibilities of provider, employer and any third party provider.			
Training given by third party providers is closely monitored.			
On- and Off-the-job learning sessions are observed by trained observers and feedback is given to the trainers/teachers.			
Comments			
Priority for action			

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making work-based learning work

The other books in this series are:

- Effective entry to work-based learning
- Improving employer engagement in the delivery of Apprenticeships
- Improving the grade in work-based learning
- Increasing flexibility in the delivery of Apprenticeships

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